United Nations S/2017/410

Security Council

Distr.: General
11 May 2017

Original: English

Identical letters dated 9 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to convey herewith a letter dated 6 May 2017 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, regarding the Turkish airstrikes on the town of Sinjar, in northern Iraq (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mohammed Sahib **Marzooq**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the identical letters dated 9 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

On 25 April 2017, Turkish Forces once again committed a flagrant violation of Iraqi sovereignty by launching more than 20 rockets at the Jabal Sinjar area in northern Iraq. The attack killed a number of members of the Peshmerga forces along with several of the region's inhabitants. I should like to stress that that attack was a clear violation of international law and international norms, as well as the principle of friendly relations between neighbouring countries.

My country's Government reiterates what it has stated in previous letters with regard to the importance of respecting Iraq's sovereignty and borders, which must not be violated or breached under any pretext whatsoever. You should also be aware that the Turkish Government gave no advance warning, nor did it request approval or coordination. That behaviour is unacceptable and will adversely affect good-neighbourly relations between our two countries. It also undermines the tireless war being fought by Iraq on behalf of the entire world against terrorism in the form of the terrorist Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) gangs, which will pose a threat to international and regional peace and security.

In the light of the above, I call on you to take resolute measures to ensure that the Turkish side refrains from repeating this type of attack and withdraws its military forces from Iraqi territory immediately, with a view to maintaining international peace and security in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, international law, and the basic principles upon which the Organization is founded.

In closing, I should like to express my appreciation for your ongoing efforts in support of Iraq.

(*Signed*) Ibrahim **Al-Jaafari**
Minister for Foreign Affairs

United Nations A/ES-10/752–S/2017/411

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
18 May 2017

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Identical letters dated 9 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

We write to you once again to express our grave and increasing concerns regarding the plight of the thousands of Palestinian civilians, men, women, children and elected officials, imprisoned and detained by Israel, the occupying Power.

We must specifically draw the international community's urgent attention to the acute situation of more than 1,500 Palestinian prisoners, who have been on hunger strike for over three weeks — and are now in their 22nd day of hunger strike — in protest at their inhumane treatment in captivity and in a collective appeal for respect for their basic human rights. This hunger strike — named the Freedom and Dignity Strike — constitutes the largest such strike to date against the occupation's brutal practices of imprisonment and detention, in violation of international law, and, in particular, the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Without food intake for three weeks, the prisoners' health is rapidly declining and illnesses are increasing, imposing even further agony on them in captivity. Here, we must underscore that their hunger strike represents one of the most non-violent, peaceful actions that could possibly be taken under such conditions to draw attention to their plight. It is an action inflicting suffering and sacrifice on the prisoners themselves, along with their families and the Palestinian society as a whole that continues to witness this oppression and injustice being perpetrated by the occupation against the Palestinian people. The deterioration of the prisoners' situation and lack of remedy for their plight continues not only to heighten solidarity in their support, but also to heighten anger and tensions across the population in Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem.

However, rather than responding to the prisoners' legitimate grievances and calls for humane treatment, including, an end to solitary confinement, torture, medical negligence and administrative detention, as well as for proper access to education, medical care and family visitation, Israel continues to ignore their appeals and to violate its legal obligations, particularly under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Dismissing the seriousness of the hunger strike and attempting to break

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the prisoners' will, the occupying Power has, instead, intensified its abuse and collective punishment of the prisoners, including by imposing solitary confinement, isolating, harassing, humiliating and further mistreating them and threatening to force-feed them.

At the same time, Israeli officials continue to incite the prisoners and have also resorted to cynical attempts to degrade the integrity of the hunger strike and cast doubt on its leaders. In this regard, claims by Israeli officials that the occupation's treatment of Palestinian prisoners and detainees "exceeds international standards" are appalling. How can the ill-treatment and torture of human beings — including both physical and psychological torture — and their inhuman degradation in any way be characterized or considered as in conformity with or exceeding international standards? Such claims are offensive, make a mockery of international law and must be rejected.

Considering the dangerous decline of the situation of the hunger-striking prisoners, many of whom are in a fragile condition, and the growing tensions on the ground, we call for serious attention to this crisis and for international intervention to demand and compel Israel's respect for its obligations as an occupying Power under international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, including as regards Palestinian prisoners and detainees in its captivity. Action is essential to avert further deterioration and avert loss of life and the destabilizing impact that such negative developments would have on the ground and on the prospects for peace.

We thus appeal for immediate efforts in response to the pleas of the hunger-striking prisoners, who are among the 6,500 Palestinians in Israeli prisons, appealing for respect for their basic rights, for their dignity and for their humanity. We call for an end to their abuse and for their humane treatment in captivity, while also reiterating our calls for their release and an end to Israel's daily arrest campaign, by which more and more innocent Palestinians continue to be imprisoned and added to the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who have tragically endured imprisonment or detention under this 50-year illegal Israeli foreign occupation.

We convey this appeal through you to the international community, hopeful for, and urging, the needed support and solidarity for the Palestinian people, including the Palestinian prisoners, at this critical time, in line with the long-standing political, legal and moral obligations regarding the question of Palestine and in line with the collective responsibilities incumbent on States under common article 1 of the Geneva Conventions.

This letter is in follow-up to our 610 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 28 April 2017 (A/ES-10/751-S/2017/376), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feda **Abdelhady-Nasser**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

United Nations S/2017/412

Security Council

Distr.: General
15 May 2017

Original: English

United States of America: draft resolution

The Security Council,

Recalling its previous resolutions and its presidential statements on the situation in Sudan and South Sudan, and in particular, resolutions 1990 (2011), 2024 (2011), 2032 (2011), 2046 (2012), 2047 (2012), 2075 (2012), 2104 (2013), 2126 (2013), 2156 (2014), 2179 (2014), 2205 (2015), 2230 (2015), 2251 (2015), 2287 (2016), and 2318 (2016) as well as presidential statements S/PRST/2012/19 and S/PRST/2013/14, and the Council's press statements of 18 June 2012, 21 September 2012, 28 September 2012, 6 May 2013, 14 June 2013, 14 February 2014, 17 March 2014, 11 December 2014, and 27 November 2015,

Reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Sudan and South Sudan, and to the purposes and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and recalling the importance of the principles of good neighbourliness, non-interference and regional cooperation,

Reiterating that the territorial boundaries of States shall not be altered by force, and that any territorial disputes shall be settled exclusively by peaceful means, *affirming* the priority it attaches to the full and urgent implementation of all outstanding issues from the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), and *underscoring* that the future status of Abyei shall be resolved by negotiations between the parties in a manner consistent with the CPA and not by the unilateral actions of either party,

Recalling the commitments made by the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan in the 20 June 2011 Agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area, the 29 June 2011 Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Government of South Sudan on Border Security and the Joint Political and Security Mechanism (JPSM), and the 30 July 2011 Agreement on the Border Monitoring Support Mission between the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan, as well as the 27 September 2012 Agreements on Cooperation and Security Arrangements, the JPSM's 8 March 2013 decision, and the Implementation Matrix of 12 March 2013, reached by the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan in Addis Ababa under the auspices of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), as well as the extraordinary meeting of the JPSM on 13-14 October 2015 and the ordinary session of the JPSM on 5 June 2016,

Encouraging progress on improving bilateral relations between Sudan and South Sudan, and *stressing the need* for regular meetings of the JPSM and other

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joint mechanisms, including the Joint Border Commission and Joint Demarcation Committee, to enable dialogue and coordination on matters of border security,

Urging the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to reinvigorate progress towards implementing the Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area as set out in the 20 June 2011 Agreement,

Expressing its full support for the efforts of the African Union on the situation between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan, in order to ease the current tension, facilitate the resumption of negotiations on post-secession relations and the normalization of their relations, and *stressing* the importance of the African Union's continued engagement,

Reaffirming its previous resolutions 1265 (1999), 1296 (2000), 1674 (2006), 1738 (2006), 1894 (2009) 2175 (2014) and 2222 (2015) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict; 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011), 2068 (2012), 2143 (2014) and 2223 (2015) on children and armed conflict; 1502 (2003) on the protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel; and 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), and 2242 (2015) on women, peace and security,

Stressing the need for effective human rights monitoring and reporting, including of any sexual and gender-based violence and violations and abuses committed against women and children, *taking note* that there have been no developments with regard to the operationalization of human rights monitoring in the Abyei Area, and *reiterating* its concern at the lack of cooperation by the parties with the Secretary-General to this end,

Recalling that its resolution 2086 (2013) reiterates the importance, when establishing and renewing the mandates of United Nations Missions, of including provisions on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in post-conflict situations and on children and armed conflict, and *emphasizing* that persistent barriers to full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), and subsequent resolutions on women, peace, and security, including 2242 (2015), will only be dismantled through dedicated commitment to women's empowerment, participation, and human rights, and through concerted leadership, consistent information and action, and support, to build women's engagement in all levels of decision-making,

Acknowledging the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan's acceptance at the 13-14 October 2015 JPSM meeting of the map presented by the AUHIP in November 2011 relating to the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone (SDBZ), their agreement that the centreline is only the location of the separation line between armed forces, as well as the parties' agreement to activate all mechanisms relating to the JPSM as provided for in relevant agreements, and *encouraging* the parties to delineate or agree on the coordinates of, and demilitarize the SDBZ, including the "14 Mile Area", and to fully implement the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), in accordance with Security Council resolution 2046 (2012) and the AUPSC Roadmap of 24 April 2012, and *underlining* the importance of fully establishing and maintaining effective JBVMM monitoring of the SDBZ, including the "14 Mile Area", and *further urging* the parties to cooperate in allowing the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) to fulfill its responsibility to provide security for the JBVMM's mission to monitor the SDBZ,

Regretting the lack of significant progress made by both parties on the benchmarks for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) and the unnecessary impediments imposed upon the JBVMM, reducing its ability to effectively monitor the SDBZ,

Noting with concern the absence of local institutions to manage the Abyei Area and lack of progress in convening an Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC) meeting since March 2015,

Recognizing the importance of regular dialogue between the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan, *recalling* the United Nations Security Council decision in resolution 2046 (2012) that the parties must resume immediately negotiations to reach agreement on Abyei final status under the auspices of the AUHIP, *calling upon* all parties to engage constructively in the process mediated by the AUHIP towards final agreement on the final status of the Abyei Area, and *stressing* that the parties must immediately implement pending aspects of the 20 June 2011 Agreement, in particular to resolve the dispute over the Abyei Area Agreement, and to resolve the dispute over the Abyei Area Council, and immediately establish the Abyei Area Administration and Abyei Police Service,

Stressing that both countries and communities will have much to gain if they show restraint and choose the path of dialogue instead of resorting to violence or provocations,

Commending the continued assistance provided to the parties by the AUHIP, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Sudan and South Sudan, and UNISFA,

Further commending the efforts of UNISFA in effectively carrying out its mandate, including by its ongoing facilitation of peaceful migration throughout the Abyei Area, conflict prevention, mediation and deterrence, and *expressing its deep appreciation* for the work of the troop-contributing countries, and *strongly underscoring* the unacceptability of any attack on United Nations personnel, including the firing on UNISFA patrols in early 2017 by unknown assailants, and *reiterating* that such attacks should be swiftly and thoroughly investigated, and that those responsible should be held to account,

Taking note of the security situation in the Abyei Area as characterized by the 11 April 2017 Secretary-General's report (S/2017/312), and *acknowledging* UNISFA's contribution to enhanced peace and stability since its deployment and *expressing* its determination to prevent the recurrence of violence against or displacements of civilians and to avert intercommunal conflict,

Reiterating its deep concern regarding the public administration and rule of law vacuum in the Abyei Area, due to continued delays in the establishment of the Abyei Area Administration and Council and Police, including a special unit to deal with particular issues related to nomadic migration, which are essential to maintain law and order and prevent intercommunal conflict in Abyei, and in this regard, *welcoming* UNISFA's efforts to support and strengthen community protection committees, and to continue engaging with both governments on this issue,

Noting with concern the continued delay in establishing the temporary institutions and resolving the final status of Abyei and that the continued threat of intercommunal violence contributes to heightened tensions in the Abyei Area, including those ongoing tensions that prevent UNISFA's and other agencies' Sudanese staff from returning to Abyei,

Urging all parties to refrain from any unilateral action that could aggravate intercommunal relations within the Abyei Area, *expressing concern* over the continued implications of what the AUPSC described in their 6 November 2013 press statement as "the decision by the Ngok Dinka to conduct a unilateral referendum" and also in this context, taking note that the Government of Sudan proceeded with its April 2015 national elections in Abyei,

Bearing in mind the current humanitarian situation in which humanitarian actors continue to provide assistance to 160,000 people in the Abyei Area and the importance of coherence of United Nations assistance in the region, and *further stressing* the urgency of facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all affected populations,

Affirming the importance of voluntary, safe, dignified return and sustainable reintegration of displaced persons, and of peaceful and orderly migration cycles respecting the traditional migratory routes from Sudan to South Sudan through Abyei, and urging UNISFA to continue to take measures as necessary to ensure security in the Abyei Area in accordance with its mandate,

Recalling its resolution 2117 (2013), and expressing grave concern at the threat to peace and security in Abyei arising from the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, *welcoming* the completion of infrastructure, systems, and policy for weapons confiscation, storage and destruction, and *calling on* UNISFA to ensure adequate protection of this infrastructure,

Expressing concern about the residual threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war in the Abyei Area, which hinders the safe return of displaced persons to their homes, safe migration, and livelihood activities,

Taking note of the 5 April 2017 and 11 April 2017 Secretary-General's reports (S/2017/293 and S/2017/312), including the Secretary-General's call on the parties to renew efforts to address the issues that have remained unresolved, implement the 20 June 2011 Abyei Agreement and remove all operational obstacles faced by UNISFA,

Recalling that the Security Council welcomed in resolution 2205 (2015) the decision of the Secretary-General to appoint a civilian head of mission,

Recognizing that the current situation in Abyei and along the border between the Sudan and South Sudan continues to constitute a serious threat to international peace and security,

1. *Decides* to extend until 15 November 2017 the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) as set out in paragraph 2 of resolution 1990 (2011) and modified by resolution 2024 (2011) and paragraph 1 of resolution 2075 (2012) and acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, *further decides* to extend until 15 November 2017 the tasks of UNISFA as set out in paragraph 3 of resolution 1990 (2011), and determines that for the purposes of paragraph 1 of resolution 2024 (2011), support to the operational activities of the JBVMM shall include support to the Ad Hoc Committees, as appropriate when so requested by consensual decisions of these mechanisms, within UNISFA's operational area and existing capabilities;

2. *Underscores* that continued cooperation between the Government of Sudan and Government of South Sudan is also critical for peace, security and stability and the future relations between them;

3. *Further reiterates* its demand that Sudan and South Sudan urgently commence the establishment of the Abyei Area Administration and Council, including by resolving the deadlock over the composition of the Council, and constitute the Abyei Police Service, to enable it to take over policing functions throughout the Abyei Area, including the protection of oil infrastructure, in accordance with their commitments in the 20 June 2011 Agreement;

4. *Urges* the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to resume direct negotiations in order to urgently agree on a final settlement of the Abyei question,

calls upon the parties to take concrete confidence-building measures to contribute to achieving this objective with renewed support from the AUHIP, *encourages* the AUHIP and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to continue coordinating efforts towards calling for full implementation of the 2011 agreements, and *requests* the Secretary-General to brief on progress in that regard by 15 August 2017;

5. *Regrets* that an AJOC meeting has not yet taken place, and *urges* the implementation of previous AJOC decisions and the 20 June 2011 Agreement, *recalls* the need for African Union initiatives to support this goal and *encourages* its renewed engagement, and *requests* the Secretary-General to provide an assessment of progress on these issues in his regular reports;

6. *Expresses* renewed concern regarding the delays and stalled efforts to fully operationalize the JBVMM, *recalls* the Secretary-General's benchmarks and recommendations regarding JBVMM operations, *takes note* that continued investment in achieving full operational capability of the JBVMM should be based on a set of conditions, including resolution of the dispute over the SDBZ, and *calls upon* the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan to make timely and effective use of the JBVMM, JPSM and other agreed joint mechanisms to ensure the security and transparency of the SDBZ, including the "14 Mile Area";

7. *Calls on* both parties to uphold their commitments in the Agreement on the Border Monitoring Support Mission of 30 July 2011, including resumption of border demarcation discussions, occurrence of regular meetings of the JPSM, and granting of full freedom of movement, and *calls on* both parties to demonstrate full commitment to implementation of their border arrangements and take the necessary steps to this effect, including by follow up to the 5 June 2016 meeting and by swiftly holding a further meeting of the JPSM to take the operational decisions related to their agreement on the SDBZ;

8. *Decides* that this extension of the mandate modification set forth in resolution 2024 (2011) shall be the final such extension unless both parties demonstrate through their actions clear commitment and steadfast guarantees for implementation of the JBVMM, in line with the steps outlined in paragraph 7, and requests the Secretary-General to report on the status of whether the mechanism has reached full operating capability by 15 October 2017;

9. *Decides* to decrease the authorized troop ceiling to 4,791 and *requests* the Secretary-General to keep the Council fully updated on the status of deployment as part of his regular reporting cycle;

10. *Urges* renewed efforts to determine conclusively the SDBZ centreline on the ground, and *reiterates* that the centreline of the SDBZ in no way prejudices the current or future legal status of the border, ongoing negotiations on the disputed and claimed areas, and demarcation of the borders;

11. *Underscores* that UNISFA's protection of civilians mandate as set out in paragraph 3 of resolution 1990 (2011) includes taking the necessary actions to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, irrespective of the source of such violence, and commending UNISFA's efforts in that regard;

12. *Condemns* the intermittent presence of South Sudan security service personnel and the deployment of Diffra Oil Police units in the Abyei Area, in violation of the 20 June 2011 Agreement, as well as any entry of armed militias into the territory, and *reiterates* its demands that immediately and without preconditions the Government of South Sudan fully redeploy its security service personnel from the Abyei Area and that the Government of Sudan redeploy the Oil Police in Diffra from the Abyei Area, and *further reiterates*, in accordance with relevant resolutions, in particular resolution 1990 (2011) and resolution 2046 (2012), that the Abyei Area

shall be demilitarized from any forces, as well as armed elements of the local communities, other than UNISFA and the Abyei Police Service;

13. *Supports* the AJOC's 3 May 2013 and 30 March 2015 decisions on Abyei's status as a weapons-free area, *underscores* the AUPSC's concern in its 7 May 2013 Communiqué over reports that various communities living in Abyei are heavily armed, *recalls* that the 20 June 2011 Agreement on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area stipulates that Abyei should be a weapons-free area and that only UNISFA is authorized to carry weapons inside the area, and in this regard, *urges* the two Governments to take all necessary steps to ensure that Abyei is effectively demilitarized, including through disarmament programs as necessary;

14. *Reaffirms* that UNISFA may undertake weapons confiscation and destruction in the Abyei Area as authorized under resolution 1990 (2011), consistent with its mandate and within its existing capabilities, in coordination with the signatories of the June 2011 Agreement on the Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area, the AJOC, and the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities and consistent with the previous AJOC decision to establish the Area as a "weapons free area", and *reiterates* its request that UNISFA, observe, document and report on the movement of weapons into Abyei and the presence, destruction and confiscation of weapons within Abyei as part of the Secretary-General's regular reporting cycle;

15. *Requests* UNISFA to continue its dialogue with the AJOC and with the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities on effective strategies and oversight mechanisms for ensuring full compliance by all relevant parties with Abyei's status as a weapons-free area, with a particular priority placed on the urgent elimination of heavy or crew-served weapons, as well as rocket-propelled grenades, and *calls upon* the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan, the AJOC, and the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities to extend full cooperation to UNISFA in this regard;

16. *Urges* the two Governments immediately to take steps to implement confidence-building measures among the respective communities in the Abyei Area, ensuring women are involved at all stages, including through reconciliation processes at the grass-roots level as well as through support for the ongoing efforts of non-governmental organizations engaging in peacebuilding, and by fully supporting UNISFA's efforts in promoting community dialogue, *strongly welcomes* continued engagement between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities, and *strongly urges* all Abyei communities to exercise maximum restraint in all their engagements and to desist from inflammatory acts or statements that may lead to violent clashes;

17. *Underscores* that women's participation at all levels of inter-community dialogue is critical to ensure a credible and legitimate process and calls upon all parties to promote full and equal participation of women;

18. *Welcomes* the positive developments at the grass-roots level between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities, particularly their noted commitment to reconciliation and cooperation, as demonstrated by the resumption of trading activities and the monitoring of stolen property and livestock, including the prompt return of or provision of compensation for stolen property to victims of crime;

19. *Welcomes* UNISFA initiatives, to support community dialogue and efforts by the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities to strengthen inter-communal relationships and facilitate stability and reconciliation in the Abyei Area, including the facilitation of joint peace committee meetings between both communities and re-opening of a common market;

20. *Welcomes* UNISFA's continued efforts, within existing capabilities and resources, and in close coordination with the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities, to strengthen the capacities of Community Protection Committees in order to assist with management of law and order processes in Abyei and to continue engaging with both governments on this issue;

21. *Calls upon* all parties to cooperate fully with the findings and recommendations following the Abyei Area Joint Investigation and Inquiry Committee's investigation into the killing of a UNISFA peacekeeper and the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief, *welcomes* the 24 March 2015 AUPSC press statement requesting the AU Commission to engage the parties on the findings and recommendations, and *reiterates* the need to enable the two communities to find closure on the assassination of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief, bearing in mind the need to promote stability and reconciliation in the Abyei Area;

22. *Expresses* its intention to continue reviewing as appropriate the mandate of UNISFA for possible reconfiguration of the force in light of the compliance by Sudan and South Sudan with the decisions set forth in resolution 2046 (2012) and their commitments as set forth in the Agreements of 20 June, 29 June, 30 July 2011 and 27 September 2012, including the redeployment of all forces from the SDBZ, achieving full operational capability for the JBVMM and the Ad Hoc Committees, as well as completing the full demilitarization of the Abyei Area;

23. *Calls upon* all Member States, in particular Sudan and South Sudan, to ensure the free, unhindered and expeditious movement, to and from Abyei and throughout the SDBZ, of all personnel, as well as equipment, provisions, supplies and other goods, including vehicles, aircraft, and spare parts, which are for the exclusive and official use of UNISFA;

24. *Renews* its call upon the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to provide full support to the United Nations, including by promptly issuing visas to military, police and civilian United Nations personnel, including humanitarian personnel, without prejudice to their nationality, for entry into Sudan and South Sudan, facilitating basing arrangements, infrastructure construction in the Mission Area and flight clearances, and providing logistical support, *calls upon* the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to facilitate travel from within Sudan and South Sudan to and from Abyei, and *further calls upon* all parties to fully adhere to their obligations under the Status of Forces Agreements;

25. *Recognizes* that the absence of development projects and the inability to deliver basic government services has had an adverse effect on Abyei populations and *calls upon* the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan, as well as donors to support reconstruction and capacity-building;

26. *Demands* that the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan continue to facilitate the deployment of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to ensure JBVMM freedom of movement, as well as the identification and clearance of mines in the Abyei Area and SDBZ;

27. *Further demands* that all parties involved allow all humanitarian personnel full, safe and unhindered access to civilians in need of assistance and all necessary facilities for their operations, in accordance with international law, including applicable international humanitarian law, and United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian assistance;

28. *Strongly urges* that all parties cease all forms of violence, human rights violations and abuses, violations of international humanitarian law, and violations and abuses against children in violation of applicable international law;

29. *Urges* UNISFA to make rapid progress on deploying a Women and Child Protection Advisor;

30. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that effective human rights monitoring is carried out, and the results included in his reports to the Council, and reiterates its call upon the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan to extend their full cooperation to the Secretary-General to this end, including by issuing visas to the concerned United Nations personnel;

31. *Recalls* resolution 2272 (2016) and *further requests* the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures to ensure full compliance of UNISFA with the United Nations zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and to keep the Council fully informed through his regular country-specific reports to the Council about UNISFA's progress in this regard, including with respect to the implementation of resolution 2272 (2016);

32. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to inform the Council of progress in implementing UNISFA's mandate in two written reports, no later than 31 July 2017 and 15 October 2017, and continue to bring to the Council's immediate attention any serious violations of the above referenced Agreements;

33. *Notes* the Secretary-General's efforts to ensure close cooperation among United Nations missions in the region, including UNISFA, the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), as well as his Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, and requests that he continue this practice;

34. *Decides* to remain actively seized of this matter.

United Nations S/2017/413

Security Council

Distr.: General
12 May 2017
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 10 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith humanitarian and information bulletins from the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period 3-6 May 2017 (see annex).

I should be grateful if this letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) P. **Ilichev**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 10 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Humanitarian bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (3 May 2017)

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by the Russian Federation

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides has carried out six humanitarian operations in Aleppo governorate.

In Aleppo city, residents of Shahba' al-Qadimah, 3000 neighbourhood, Tamm Bagha, Salihin, Turab al-Hallak and Hannanu districts received 1.8 tons of food products.

Over the past 24 hours, humanitarian assistance has been provided to 1,240 residents.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by international organizations

Russian airplanes parachuted 21 tons of humanitarian cargoes (food products) to the city of Dayr al-Zawr, which were received by the Syrian authorities through the United Nations.

In Damascus governorate, an automobile convoy from Damascus city delivered food products and medicines to 35,000 residents of the city of Duma.

Information bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (4 May 2017)

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, no ceasefire regime agreements have been signed with populated areas.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process remains unchanged at 1,477.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime have continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire of 27 February 2016 is unchanged — it is still 143.

The number of populated areas which the Syrian government forces have liberated from armed groups of the international terrorist organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) since 1 January 2017 remains unchanged at 236.

Observance of the ceasefire regime

At 0000 hours on 30 December 2016, a ceasefire came into force in accordance with the consolidated agreement on a comprehensive resolution of the Syrian crisis.

The number of Syrian opposition armed groups that have joined the ceasefire regime remains unchanged at 65.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the consolidated agreement has reported 16 violations in the following governorates: 9 in Damascus, 4 in Ladhiqiyah, 2 in Hama and 1 in Dar'a.

The Turkish representative office has reported seven violations of the consolidated agreement in the following governorates: three in Hama, two in Damascus and two in Homs.

The Russian representative office has not confirmed any of the seven violations during its investigations of the incidents.

Humanitarian bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (4 May 2017)

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by the Russian Federation

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides has carried out four humanitarian operations in Aleppo, Ladhiqiyah and Qunaytirah governorates.

In Aleppo city, 1.2 tons of bottled drinking water were delivered to the residents of Shaba' al-Qadimah district.

The residents of Afrin in Aleppo governorate received 8 tons of humanitarian cargoes (food products, bottled drinking water and essential items).

The residents of Ra's al-Basit in Ladhiqiyah governorate and Kawm al-Wayisiyah in Qunaytirah governorate received 7.6 tons of food products.

In total, 16.8 tons of humanitarian cargoes have been distributed to the population.

Over the past 24 hours, humanitarian assistance has been provided to 5,293 residents.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by international organizations

Russian airplanes parachuted 20.9 tons of humanitarian cargoes (food products) to the city of Dayr al-Zawr, which were received by the Syrian authorities through the United Nations.

Information bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (5 May 2017)

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, two ceasefire agreements have been signed with Uwayjil in Aleppo governorate and with Dar'a city in Dar'a governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 1,479.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire of 27 February 2016 is unchanged — it is still 143.

The number of populated areas which Syrian government forces have liberated from armed groups of the international terrorist organization ISIL since 1 January 2017 has increased to 237.

Over the past 24 hours, government forces have gained control of 6 square kilometres. A total area of 4,635 square kilometres has been liberated.

Observance of the ceasefire regime

At 0000 hours on 30 December 2016, a ceasefire came into force in accordance with the consolidated agreement on a comprehensive resolution of the Syrian crisis.

The number of Syrian opposition armed groups that have joined the ceasefire regime remains unchanged at 65.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the consolidated agreement has reported 20 violations in the following governorates: 8 in Damascus, 6 in Ladhiqiyah, 3 in Hama and 3 in Dar'a.

The Turkish representative office has reported four violations of the consolidated agreement: three in Damascus governorate and one in Dar'a governorate.

The Russian representative office has not confirmed any of the four violations during its investigations of the incidents.

Humanitarian bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (5 May 2017)

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by the Russian Federation

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides has carried out seven humanitarian operations: six in Aleppo governorate and one in Dar'a governorate.

The residents of Sulaymaniah, Bani Zayd, Ma'adi, New Aleppo, Haydariyah and Zabdiyah districts in Aleppo city, and also the residents of Dar'a city, received 4.2 tons of food products.

Over the past 24 hours, humanitarian assistance has been provided to 1,350 residents.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic by international organizations

Russian airplanes parachuted 21 tons of humanitarian cargoes (food products) to the city of Dayr al-Zawr, which were received by the Syrian authorities through the United Nations.

Information bulletin of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic (6 May 2017)

Reconciliation of opposing sides

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process remains unchanged at 1,479.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire of 27 February 2016 has increased to 148.

Observance of the ceasefire regime

A memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran, entered into force at 0000 hours on 6 May 2017.

Implementation of the memorandum will help to complete the process of separating the opposition from ISIL terrorist groups and the Nusrah Front, and to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access to de-escalation areas for the delivery of medical, food and other assistance to the population.

The ceasefire regime, which entered into force at 0000 hours on 30 December 2016, continues to be monitored in accordance with the consolidated agreement on a comprehensive resolution of the Syrian crisis.

The number of Syrian opposition armed groups that have joined the ceasefire regime remains unchanged at 65.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the consolidated agreement has reported 15 violations in the following governorates: 9 in Damascus, 3 in Hama, 2 in Ladhiqiyah and 1 in Dar'a.

The Turkish representative office has reported 11 violations of the consolidated agreement in the following governorates: 4 in Damascus, 2 in Dar'a, 2 in Hama, 1 in Aleppo, 1 in Homs and 1 in Idlib.

The Russian representative office has not confirmed any of the 11 violations during its investigations of the incidents.

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Report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict

Introduction

1. The present report, covering the year 2016, is submitted pursuant to the request contained in the statement by the President of the Security Council of 25 November 2015 (S/PRST/2015/23). It is the thirteenth report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Herein, I review the global state of the protection of civilians in armed conflict, discuss recent progress and provide recommendations aimed at strengthening such protection. The report also responds to the Council's request in its resolution 2286 (2016) for enhanced reporting on the protection of medical care in armed conflict.

2. Armed conflicts are tearing apart vast swathes of the world and record numbers of people are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection.[1] Some 97 per cent of humanitarian assistance goes to complex emergencies, the majority of which involve armed conflicts.[2] Globally, more than 65 million people have been displaced by conflict, violence or persecution. More than 20 million people, including 1.4 million children, are on the brink of famine in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. At the same time, among the international community there is a growing sense of fatigue, even resignation, in addressing the suffering of civilians in conflict.

3. All State and non-State parties to conflict must respect international humanitarian law, and all States must ensure such respect. Yet, in many conflicts, parties flout their obligations and show contempt for human life and dignity, often with impunity. Civilians are routinely killed in direct and indiscriminate attacks. As conflict becomes increasingly urbanized, the impact on civilians reaches new lows, with bombs and rockets destroying schools, hospitals, markets and places of worship, while children are pulled from the rubble of their homes. Sexual violence shatters lives and undermines community cohesion. These horrors are exacerbated when civilians are deprived of basic relief items and services, sometimes even besieged for months at a time. Faced with such brutality, millions of civilians are forced to flee their homes in search of safety. The result is a global protection crisis.

[1] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Global humanitarian overview 2017: a consolidated appeal to support people affected by disaster and conflict".

[2] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *World Humanitarian Data and Trends 2016* (New York, 2016).

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4. In the present report I set out a path to protection — my vision for collective action to strengthen the protection of civilians in armed conflict. My overarching priority is to galvanize the international community to prevent and resolve conflicts and build sustainable peace. In the long term, the best way to protect civilians is to tackle the root causes of conflicts, promote human rights and the rule of law, strengthen governance and institutions and invest in inclusive and sustainable development. There must be a shift from perpetual reaction to early action, including the ability to identify and act upon signs of impending or potential conflict and threats to civilians. A commitment to conflict prevention also compels us to address illicit and irresponsible arms transfers, which enable conflict and undermine protection and peacebuilding efforts. Indeed, although beyond the scope of the present report, my vision of prevention encompasses not only violent armed conflict, but also the increasingly complex array of crises that take a significant toll on humanity and produce unsustainable levels of human suffering.

5. Where prevention fails, we must make every effort to protect the lives and dignity of civilians caught up in conflict. In this regard, three protection priorities clearly emerge across conflicts. First, we must enhance respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law and promote good practice by parties to conflict. Second, we must protect the humanitarian and medical mission and accord priority to the protection of civilians in United Nations peace operations. Third, we must prevent forced displacement and pursue durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons. These protection priorities are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. In particular, strengthening respect for international law is a prerequisite to achieving priorities two and three.

6. Achieving these goals necessitates a multi-faceted approach encompassing a diversity of actors. An intensified global effort is needed at the international, regional and national levels to raise public understanding of the human cost of conflict and enhance respect for international law and the protection of civilians. The Security Council and Member States must be at the forefront of this effort. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States committed themselves to leaving no one behind and to reaching those furthest behind first. The World Humanitarian Summit, held in 2016, reinforced this vision. Member States must now take specific action to implement their commitments and ensure that civilians in conflict, who are among the most vulnerable, are protected. I am personally committed to ensuring that this becomes a priority in all aspects of United Nations work.

Protection priority 1
Enhance respect for international law and promote good practice by parties to conflict

Reports of widespread violations indicate a lack of respect for international law across conflicts

7. In many conflicts, government forces and non-State armed groups continued to defy international law by directly targeting civilians and civilian objects, launching indiscriminate attacks or failing to take all feasible precautions to avoid civilian harm. Civilians were killed, tortured, raped, enslaved, abducted, disappeared, used as human shields, forcibly recruited or forcibly displaced, among other violations. In some conflicts, deliberately attacking hospitals, schools and places of worship, removing humanitarian goods from convoys and besieging entire communities were strategic methods of warfare.

8. These trends were epitomized in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, most visibly in Aleppo in late 2016. Direct attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools, in addition to the indiscriminate use of artillery, mortars, rockets and air-delivered bombs, were widely reported in both conflicts. In the Syrian Arab Republic, besiegement of communities remained a deliberate tactic, triggering allegations that starvation was used as a method of war. Water supplies were cut off in Aleppo and Damascus, in some cases deliberately, affecting millions of people (see A/HRC/34/CRP.3, paras. 32-37, and A/HRC/34/64, para. 47), while Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and affiliated groups continued to carry out suicide bombings, sexual enslavement of women and girls, summary executions, physical mutilation and other atrocities. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons investigated more than 60 credible allegations of chemical weapon use in the Syrian Arab Republic. In Yemen, the United Nations found credible allegations of the use of cluster bombs by coalition forces and of landmines by pro-Houthi armed groups and pro-Saleh army units (see A/HRC/33/38, paras. 33-36).

9. Hostilities escalated significantly in Afghanistan, where the United Nations recorded 11,418 conflict-related civilian casualties (3,498 killed and 7,920 injured), the highest number since the systematic documentation of civilian casualties began in 2009. Particularly concerning was the 24 per cent increase in the number of child casualties (923 killed and 2,589 injured) compared with 2015. Non-State armed groups continued to target civilians using suicide tactics and improvised explosive devices, while the number of civilian casualties from air strikes doubled compared with 2015. The civilian toll also remained high in Iraq (6,878 killed and 12,388 injured). There were widespread reports of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law perpetrated against Iraqi civilians, in particular by ISIL. These included attacks targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, the use of human shields, summary executions, sexual violence, forced marriage, abductions and forcible recruitment of children.

10. Similar patterns were documented in other conflicts, to varying degrees. In north-eastern Nigeria and neighbouring Lake Chad basin countries, violations and abuses were reportedly committed by Boko Haram and in the context of government counter-insurgency operations. In one of the worst forms of forcible recruitment and use, Boko Haram used 30 girls and boys for suicide attacks in the Lake Chad basin. In South Sudan, the protection of civilians continued to deteriorate, in particular from July. Reported incidents included extrajudicial killings, abductions, sexual violence and restrictions on freedom of movement by both parties to conflict. In November, my Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide warned of the risk of genocide in South Sudan. Genocide does not happen overnight; it is a process that takes time to prepare. Therefore, it can be prevented. We have a shared responsibility to do everything in our power to avert the risk and I call upon the Security Council to take decisive action.

11. In the occupied Palestinian territory, the violence that escalated in late 2015 continued at a reduced level. In December, the Security Council adopted resolution 2334 (2016), in which it condemned a range of measures in the occupied Palestinian territory that violated international humanitarian law and relevant resolutions, calling for an end to all settlement activities, acts of violence and incitement.

12. Endemic sexual violence continued with impunity in many conflicts, as detailed in my annual report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2017/249). There were widespread reports of rapes by parties to conflict, mostly in conjunction with other crimes such as killing, looting, abduction, forced displacement, arbitrary detention and trafficking in persons. In many cases, the strategic nature of the violence was evident in the selective targeting of victims from opposing ethnic, religious or political groups. Patterns of sexual violence were also seen in the

context of urban warfare, during house searches and operations in residential areas and at checkpoints. I call upon the Security Council, Member States and other relevant actors to implement the recommendations in that report, including by supporting the socioeconomic reintegration of survivors, who often suffer lifelong stigma and exclusion.

13. Children continued to pay a heavy price in conflict. In several conflicts, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, grave violations against children, in particular killing and maiming, continued at high levels, as recorded through the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict. The recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups also remained a serious concern, with significant increases in the Central African Republic, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic.

14. I am particularly concerned about the detrimental impact of conflict on education. The United Nations Children's Fund estimates that 246 million children live in conflict zones and many are deprived of education when their schools are destroyed, used for military purposes or closed for security reasons or because teachers have fled. In Afghanistan, nearly half of primary-school-age children are out of school. In South Sudan, almost 60 per cent of primary-school-age children are out of school and 1 in 3 schools in conflict-affected areas has been closed. The military use of 41 schools in Afghanistan was verified through the monitoring and reporting mechanism, and there were 21 new cases of such use in South Sudan. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there were 51 verified attacks on schools, more than double the number in 2015. Girls' education continued to suffer, with threats or attacks against female teachers and pupils in Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, Nigeria and the Syrian Arab Republic. I urge all Member States to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, an international commitment to protect schools and universities from being attacked or used for military purposes in conflict.

15. I am also concerned about the plight of missing persons and their families. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the number of persons reported missing in conflicts has dramatically increased since 2014 and in some contexts has more than quadrupled. I call upon parties to conflict to uphold families' right to know the fate of their missing relatives, as provided by international humanitarian law, and I encourage parties to collaborate with ICRC and its Central Tracing Agency as a neutral, independent and impartial intermediary.

Greater efforts are needed to avoid civilian harm during urban hostilities

16. Armed conflicts are increasingly being fought in urban areas,[3] affecting an estimated 50 million people in cities worldwide.[4] Several major cities, including Aleppo, Fallujah, Juba, Maiduguri, Mosul, Sirte and Ta'izz, witnessed intense urban battles. Owing to high population density and the close proximity of civilians and civilian objects to military objectives, urban warfare entails a greater risk of civilian death, injury and displacement, in addition to damage to civilian property and essential infrastructure. Moreover, urban systems such as water and power supplies are often interconnected, meaning that damage to infrastructure can have a dire impact on large numbers of people.

17. Urban warfare is particularly devastating for civilians when it involves the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects. Many parties to conflict routinely use

[3] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *States of Fragility 2016: Understanding Violence* (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2016).

[4] ICRC, "Urban services during protracted armed conflict: a call for a better approach to assisting affected people" (Geneva, 2015).

heavy artillery, aerial bombardment and improvised explosive devices in urban centres. According to Action on Armed Violence, 45,624 deaths and injuries from explosive weapons were reported; 70 per cent (32,088) were civilians. When explosive weapons were used in populated areas, civilians accounted for 92 per cent of reported deaths and injuries. Action on Armed Violence recorded the highest number of civilian deaths and injuries from explosive weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, followed by Iraq, Yemen and Afghanistan.

18. The use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas also has dire long-term consequences for civilians, including the destruction of housing, schools, hospitals, electricity grids and water and sanitation systems, the displacement of civilians and the loss of education and livelihood opportunities. In the Syrian Arab Republic, air strikes around Damascus in December damaged an aquifer and other key water infrastructure, depriving more than 5 million people of regular access to potable water for over a month (see A/HRC/34/CRP.3, para. 37). Globally, this pattern is largely predictable, and its immense scale is undermining efforts to protect civilians, build lasting peace and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

19. The use of explosive weapons also leaves explosive remnants of war, which pose a continuing lethal threat to civilians, especially children, and a major obstacle to reconstruction and the return of displaced persons. The United Nations recorded a sharp rise in global civilian casualties from landmines and other explosive remnants of war, with contamination affecting more than 80 countries and territories. In Afghanistan, 2016 saw the highest-ever recorded number of civilian casualties from explosive remnants of war (217 killed and 507 injured), an increase of 66 per cent compared with 2015; 84 per cent of those casualties were children. In Iraq, many internally displaced persons reported that their homes had been contaminated with explosive remnants of war, preventing their return. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the Mine Action Service estimates that 6.3 million people live in contaminated areas. The importance of clearance operations and risk education cannot be overstated. Such operations not only prevent casualties, but also enable civilians to return home and rebuild their livelihoods and reduce the potential for explosive remnants of war to be repurposed into improvised explosive devices.

20. Minimizing the impact of urban combat on civilians is a vitally important task for both attacking and defending forces. This includes taking constant care to spare civilians and civilian objects, avoiding locating military objectives in or near densely populated areas and removing civilians and civilian objects from the vicinity of military objectives. Crucially, I call upon all State and non-State parties to conflict to avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas. Parties should also develop and implement operational policies and practical measures on the use of these weapons to avoid civilian harm. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has compiled examples of existing policy and practice to assist parties in this regard. The Austrian-led process to develop a political declaration on the humanitarian impact of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas provides an important avenue for discussion and action. I encourage Member States to engage constructively in this process.

All States must use their influence to enhance respect for international law

21. A survey by ICRC of 17,000 people, entitled "People on war: perspectives from 16 countries", conducted in 2016, showed that civilians in conflict-affected countries clearly recognized the value of applying international humanitarian law; they were acutely aware that war must have limits. It also revealed an alarming trend among the populations of countries not directly affected by hostilities: compared with 1999, there is a growing degree of acceptance that civilian death is

an inevitable part of war. We must counter this narrative and reverse this trend. Civilian death and suffering would be greatly reduced if existing rules of international law were implemented effectively.

22. All parties to conflict must comply with their obligations to respect and protect civilians, but the onus to ensure respect for international humanitarian law does not rest on them alone. All States are obliged to ensure respect for international humanitarian law in all circumstances. Their words and actions should encourage other States and non-State parties to conflict to uphold respect for civilians' lives and dignity. Conversely, States must not facilitate violations by financing, arming or training parties who are at risk of flouting the law. In this regard, military partnerships provide a unique opportunity to influence parties to conflict and ensure respect for international law.

Irresponsible arms transfers exacerbate conflict and undermine the protection of civilians

23. The Security Council has repeatedly recognized that the widespread availability and poorly regulated transfer of arms and ammunition are key enablers of conflict and civilian harm.[5] In this regard, I reiterate the recommendations made in 2016 (see A/71/438-A/CONF.192/BMS/2016/1). The effective implementation of instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty and the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects can greatly contribute to protecting civilians. I urge all States to refrain from exporting conventional arms and ammunition where they are likely to be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law or international human rights law. Rigorous due diligence measures should underpin this restraint, including the undertaking of risk assessments before authorizing arms exports and periodic review thereafter. I strongly encourage all States to ratify or accede to the Arms Trade Treaty and similar regional instruments without delay.

Positive examples of dialogue, policy and practice to enhance the protection of civilians in conflict

24. There were several important initiatives at the international, regional and national levels in 2016. In May, the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit was held in Istanbul, Turkey, with more than 9,000 participants from Member States, non-governmental organizations, civil society, international organizations, the private sector and crisis-affected populations. Stakeholders made more than 3,000 commitments to advancing the various elements of the Agenda for Humanity, including upholding international law and strengthening the protection of civilians. I urge all stakeholders to translate their commitments into specific action and provide updates on their progress annually through the Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformations.

25. The intergovernmental process on strengthening respect for international humanitarian law, mandated at the Thirty-second International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, held in Geneva in December 2015, continued to make progress. Several meetings were held in 2016, with more planned for 2017. I encourage all Member States to engage constructively in this process.

26. At the regional level, the African Union remained a key partner in protecting civilians. The African Union Mission in Somalia, supported by the United Nations, made important progress in implementing its Civilian Casualty Tracking, Analysis and Response Cell and began to develop standard operating procedures to make

[5] See resolutions 2274 (2016), 2283 (2016), 2296 (2016) and 2313 (2016).

amends for civilian harm resulting from its operations. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization adopted a policy for the protection of civilians, which is aimed at instilling a coherent approach to the protection of civilians in all its operations, missions and activities, including in planning and conducting operations, training, lesson learning and capacity-building.

27. At the national level, the Government of Afghanistan, supported by the United Nations, developed a draft national policy on civilian casualty mitigation and established working groups to support the implementation of policies and practices to protect civilians in conflict. In Nigeria, the Defence Headquarters committed itself to developing a national policy on civilian protection and harm mitigation, following a multi-stakeholder dialogue in November. The Government of the United States of America issued an executive order setting out policies and practices to mitigate civilian casualties in military operations, including pre-strike measures such as enhanced training and capabilities and post-strike measures such as investigations, public reporting and ex gratia payments.

28. In Colombia, the landmark peace agreement between the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo was a welcome development with the potential to transform the lives of those affected by the conflict. In the Central African Republic, the Government ratified or acceded to seven core international human rights instruments. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Government continued to implement its action plan to end and prevent sexual violence and the recruitment and use of children by the military, including through the prosecution of several commanders. In the Sudan, the Government signed an action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children in conflict.

29. If implemented effectively, the measures described above could play a significant role in strengthening the protection of civilians. I urge Member States and regional and other intergovernmental organizations to develop and implement holistic policies or strategies on the protection of civilians and civilian harm mitigation, including training, doctrine and the development of capacities to track and analyse civilian harm in military operations. This would help to institutionalize the protection of civilians in regional, national and local contexts.

30. Important progress was made in addressing the conduct of non-State armed groups, which are key actors in today's conflicts. Two additional groups signed the Geneva Call deed of commitment for the protection of children from the effects of armed conflict, and one signed its deed of commitment for the prohibition of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict and towards the elimination of gender discrimination. In the Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North signed an action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children in conflict. In Colombia, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo increased the age limit for recruitment from 17 to 18 years and began to demobilize children. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the Syrian Democratic Forces prohibited the recruitment of persons under 18 years of age. I encourage non-State armed groups to adopt practical measures aimed at protecting civilians, working with the United Nations and relevant non-governmental organization as appropriate.

Systematic data collection, analysis and reporting enhance protection and accountability

31. Systematic data collection, analysis and reporting facilitate evidence-based analysis of trends and patterns of civilian harm, inform dialogue with parties to conflict, deter violations and promote accountability. Human rights monitoring and

reporting, casualty tracking and gender analysis are critical. In Somalia, for example, United Nations human rights risk assessments for Somali security forces and African Union Mission in Somalia operations informed measures to mitigate civilian casualties and prevent violations. I encourage the development and improvement of mechanisms to systematically collect information relating to the protection of civilians, including data disaggregated by sex and age, and to ensure that it feeds into conflict analysis, prevention and response.

32. Journalists play an important role in conflict situations. Independent and accurate reporting is essential to expose human suffering, restrain military actors and put pressure on political actors to find solutions to conflicts and promote accountability. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization condemned the killing of 102 journalists. The majority were killed in conflict situations; countless others were injured. I urge Member States to inform the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization of the status of judicial enquiries into these killings, strengthen protection for journalists reporting in conflict situations and prevent impunity. The United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity remains an essential guiding framework in this regard.

Accountability is crucial to enhance respect for international law and provide justice for victims

33. Fundamental to enhancing respect for international law is the need to ensure accountability for violations, for both parties to conflict and individual perpetrators. There were several positive developments in national-level investigations and prosecutions, although some initiatives made limited progress. For example, the Central African Republic took steps to make the Special Criminal Court operational, including by making progress towards the recruitment of the prosecutor and judicial staff. In Mali, a joint United Nations-government mechanism was established to review progress in investigations and prosecutions in key cases; however, the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, established in 2015, made limited progress. In the Sudan, the number of cases, in particular cases of sexual violence against children, handled by the Office of the Special Prosecutor for the crimes committed in Darfur continued to increase. I urge the Security Council to encourage effective remedies at the national level for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

34. International investigative and judicial mechanisms can also help to ensure accountability. For example, the General Assembly adopted resolution 71/248, by which it established an international, impartial and independent mechanism to assist in the investigation and prosecution of persons responsible for the most serious crimes under international law committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011.

35. The International Criminal Court made important progress, including by completing the trials of Jean-Pierre Bemba (convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the Central African Republic) and Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi (convicted of crimes relating to the destruction of religious buildings and historic monuments in Timbuktu, Mali). It also began the trial of an alleged Lord's Resistance Army commander, Dominic Ongwen, and authorized a new investigation in Georgia. As the Court's caseload continues to increase, protecting this indispensable institution and its work must be a priority. It was therefore deeply concerning that some States parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court took steps towards withdrawing from the Statute. I welcome the revocations of withdrawal by the Governments of the Gambia and South Africa and urge those and other States parties to reaffirm their commitment to the Court. I call

upon all States to strengthen dialogue, ratify the Statute and cooperate with the Court to ensure that this essential system of justice is as far-reaching as possible.

36. The International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia made further progress towards the completion of its work, notably by completing the trial of Radovan Karadžić (convicted of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes). The sustained political support that the Security Council and Member States have provided to the Tribunal has been essential to the fulfilment of its mandate. Similar levels of support should be provided to the International Criminal Court to enable it to fulfil its mandate. I also call upon the Council to refer situations to the Court in appropriate cases.

Protection priority II
Protect the humanitarian and medical mission and accord priority to the protection of civilians in United Nations peace operations

A collective effort is needed to protect medical care in armed conflict: resolution 2286 (2016)

37. More than 150 years ago, States agreed on a binding set of rules to protect wounded and sick combatants and those who care for them in conflict. Today it is a sacrosanct obligation under international humanitarian law to care for and treat all wounded and sick — civilians and combatants alike — and to respect and protect them and the medical personnel and facilities that fulfil this mission. In recent conflicts, however, many hospitals have been treated as part of the battlefield rather than as sanctuaries for the wounded and sick. The World Health Organization (WHO) recorded attacks against medical care in 20 conflict-affected countries resulting in 863 medical personnel being killed or injured. Many incidents were never investigated, and where investigations were conducted they often failed to meet international standards, preventing effective corrective action and accountability.

38. The level of violence affecting medical care is particularly alarming in the Syrian Arab Republic, where Physicians for Human Rights documented 108 attacks on medical facilities. Many facilities were damaged beyond repair, depriving people of medical care just when they needed it most. In one particularly brutal series of attacks between July and November, multiple air strikes were launched on a square in the Shi'ar district of Aleppo, where three hospitals, a clinic and the blood bank were located (see A/HRC/34/64, para. 38). Several air strikes hit the only children's hospital in eastern Aleppo, leading to the death of four newborns and undermining children's access to health care.

39. Similar patterns were evident in other conflicts, to varying degrees. In the Central African Republic, the United Nations verified 16 attacks against medical facilities, while 19 were verified in Yemen. In some cases, medical facilities were hit notwithstanding the adoption of specific deconfliction measures. For example, Médecins sans frontières reported that two hospitals that it supported in Yemen were hit by air strikes in the second half of 2016, even though it had shared the GPS coordinates with parties to conflict and clearly marked the building roofs.

40. There were also numerous cases of medical supplies being removed from humanitarian convoys and warehouses. In the Syrian Arab Republic, government security forces removed medical supplies, including trauma kits, surgical supplies, anaesthetics and antibiotics, from more than three quarters of inter-agency convoys.

By the end of the year, the Government had confiscated 75 tons of medicines and medical supplies.[6]

41. In other instances, parties to conflict used medical facilities for military purposes, sometimes for months or even years at a time. This exposed facilities and patients to an increased risk of attack. In Afghanistan, parties successively took over a health clinic in the district of Jani Khel, Paktiya province, between August and October, destroying and looting 60 per cent of its medical equipment. In Iraq, ISIL took over the Salam hospital in eastern Mosul for two years, using it as a base during intense fighting in December and thereby endangering patients and medical staff. ISIL also took over the second floor of the Fallujah general hospital for several months before it was hit by an air strike in May, damaging the emergency room and other facilities.

42. Every medical worker attacked, every hospital bombed, every medical convoy looted deprives the wounded and sick of vital care. This jeopardizes life and exacerbates suffering. For example, WHO estimates that 30,000 people are injured each month in the Syrian conflict, and without timely treatment many will suffer lifelong disabilities. Attacks on medical care also have catastrophic longer-term consequences as facilities close and workers flee, depriving entire communities of access to medical services. WHO estimates that only 43 per cent of the South Sudanese health facilities remain functional, providing minimal services. In Yemen, medical supplies are in chronically short supply, and only 45 per cent of medical facilities are functioning. In the Syrian Arab Republic, more than half of all medical facilities are closed or only partially functioning, and two thirds of specialized medical personnel have fled the country. An estimated 360,000 women in the Syrian Arab Republic are pregnant and require reproductive and maternal health services, which in many cases are not readily available.[7]

43. Less-visible impediments to the provision of medical care have also emerged. In some contexts, States have developed policies or practices that prevent, impede or punish the impartial provision of medical care in line with medical ethics. In Afghanistan, the United Nations reported that medical personnel had been threatened, intimidated, harassed and abducted to prevent the treatment of wounded or sick opposition fighters. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the Government has on many occasions withheld approval for the delivery of medical supplies and equipment in areas controlled by non-State armed groups. Some States have even enacted legislation that may criminalize the provision of medical care to members of some non-State armed groups, such as those designated as "terrorist" by the Security Council or under national law.

44. All parties to conflict have an obligation to respect and protect wounded and sick civilians and fighters alike. The wounded and sick must not be attacked. They must receive the medical care and attention required by their condition to the fullest extent practicable and with the least possible delay, without any distinction except on medical grounds. Parties to conflict must also respect and protect medical personnel, units and transports exclusively assigned and engaged in medical duties and must not punish any person for performing medical duties in line with medical ethics.

45. The Security Council recalled those rules and called for their full implementation in its landmark resolution 2286 (2016) on the protection of medical care in armed conflict. The Council urged parties to conflict and Member States to

[6] WHO Syrian Arab Republic, *Annual Report 2016* (Damascus, WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, 2017).

[7] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian response plan: January-December 2017 — Syrian Arab Republic" (March 2017).

take action in several areas, including facilitating the safe and unimpeded passage of medical personnel, assets and supplies; developing effective measures to prevent and address acts of violence, attacks and threats against medical care; integrating protection measures into the planning and conduct of military operations; and conducting effective investigations into alleged violations of international humanitarian law. In August, upon the Council's request, the Secretary-General submitted recommendations identifying practical measures to implement the resolution (see S/2016/722).

46. Many stakeholders have already taken such steps. Canada and Switzerland have established an informal group of States to support implementation, notably through the exchange of good practice. Several Member States are reviewing their national legal frameworks. The International Committee of Military Medicine, which encompasses the military medical services of 112 States, urged its members to put the protection of medical care on the agenda of their political and military authorities. National Red Cross and Red Crescent societies have continued to advocate a range of specific protection measures. Efforts are also under way, most notably by WHO, to improve the collection of data on impediments to medical care. These are welcome initiatives. I urge all Member States, parties to conflict and relevant organizations to implement practical measures, such as those contained in the recommendations submitted pursuant to resolution 2286 (2016), without delay.

Humanitarian access is essential for civilians to receive life-saving assistance and protection

47. Rapid, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access is critical for an effective response to the needs of millions of people affected by conflicts. Widespread, serious and sometimes persistent humanitarian access constraints jeopardized humanitarian operations. Besides active hostilities, the most severe constraints included attacks against humanitarian personnel or assets and bureaucratic impediments, including movement restrictions.

48. There is a particularly urgent need for greater humanitarian access in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, where millions are on the brink of famine. Humanitarian access restrictions imposed by parties to conflict played a key role in this crisis. In Yemen, for example, access denials and restrictions by all parties severely hampered the humanitarian response. There were difficulties in obtaining entry clearances from the de facto authorities for essential humanitarian supplies such as vaccines. Compounding these constraints, several commercial vessels destined for Yemeni ports on the Red Sea were deliberately delayed, blocked or diverted by the coalition led by Saudi Arabia, thereby restricting the import of food, fuel and other basic commodities. This had grave consequences for civilians as food imports reached their lowest level since the conflict began.

49. In South Sudan, all parties to conflict impeded deliveries of life-saving assistance, including through bureaucratic impediments and attacks on humanitarian personnel and assets. For example, access was repeatedly denied to areas outside the town of Wau, Western Bahr el-Ghazal. Critical bureaucratic impediments included the detention and deportation of senior non-governmental organization staff and interference in recruitment processes following the passing of the Non-Governmental Organizations Act in February.

50. Parties to conflict also impeded humanitarian access in the Syrian Arab Republic, with dire consequences for civilians. Government-imposed administrative procedures severely constrained the delivery of assistance across conflict lines. The Government approved only 45 per cent of access requests. Meanwhile, the number of people living in besieged areas doubled, reaching a peak of almost 1 million in

November. On average, the United Nations was able to deliver assistance each month to only some 20 per cent of people in besieged areas and less than 10 per cent of people in hard-to-reach areas, owing to constraints imposed by the parties.

51. In Myanmar, international humanitarian organizations were prohibited from taking relief supplies into non-government-controlled areas and experienced delays in obtaining travel authorizations in government-controlled areas. Severe movement restrictions on Muslim communities continued, impeding access to basic services. In Ukraine, humanitarian access in non-government-controlled areas remained challenging owing to bureaucratic impediments imposed by the Government and the de facto authorities. The ban on all commercial trade with non-government-controlled areas, including the delivery of medical supplies, remained a significant driver of humanitarian needs.

52. Against this backdrop, I remind all parties to conflict that they have the primary responsibility for meeting the basic needs of civilians under their effective control. If these basic needs are not being met, States must not arbitrarily withhold consent to impartial relief operations in a manner contrary to international law. Once consent is granted, all parties to conflict must allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access, subject to any necessary technical and practical arrangements. Using starvation of the civilian population as a method of warfare is strictly prohibited. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs recently commissioned and published the *Oxford Guidance on the Law Relating to Humanitarian Relief Operations in Situations of Armed Conflict*, which was prepared by researchers at the University of Oxford and is aimed at facilitating policy development and advocacy to support effective humanitarian action.

53. The politicization of humanitarian action also affected the ability of humanitarian actors to reach affected populations in a safe, predictable and principled manner. Humanitarian action must remain distinct from political or military objectives and be conducted in line with the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. I urge all Member States and parties to conflict to respect these principles. In a forthcoming study, entitled "Presence and proximity: to stay and deliver, five years on", emphasis is laid on the importance of humanitarian organizations gaining the acceptance of parties to conflict in order to operate. Member States must not impede humanitarian actors' efforts to interact with all relevant parties, including non-State armed groups, and to operate in areas under their control.

Humanitarian workers and assets must be respected and protected

54. Violence against humanitarian workers and assets continued to impede humanitarian activities in conflicts, often with devastating consequences for civilians. Preliminary records from the Aid Worker Security Database show that at least 249 aid workers were killed, kidnapped or seriously wounded. The overwhelming majority were national staff. More than three quarters of recorded incidents took place in five countries, with the highest number in South Sudan, followed by Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia. Other sources reported much higher figures; for example, in South Sudan the United Nations recorded that 24 aid workers had been killed, while in Afghanistan it recorded that 15 aid workers had been killed, 26 injured and 121 abducted. In many cases, violence or threats led to the reduction or suspension of humanitarian operations, leaving vulnerable people without basic necessities for their survival.

55. In one egregious incident, an air strike hit a United Nations-Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoy and warehouse near Urum al-Kubra on 19 September. According to

the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, the attack killed at least 14 humanitarian workers, injured at least 15 others and destroyed 17 trucks and vital humanitarian supplies (see A/HRC/34/64, paras. 79-88).[8]

56. Enhancing the protection of humanitarian workers and assets necessitates action on several fronts, as outlined by the Security Council in its resolution 2175 (2014). In particular, parties to conflict must respect and protect humanitarian personnel and objects, including by taking all feasible precautions when planning or deciding upon an attack. Member States must ensure that there is accountability for acts of violence against humanitarian workers and assets in violation of applicable law.

Protection of civilians must be prioritized in United Nations peace operations

57. United Nations peace operations remain an indispensable tool for protecting civilians in complex crises. The deterioration of security in many peace operation contexts, such as Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, together with high-profile incidents in South Sudan, highlighted the enduring importance of peace operations and the challenges that they continue to face. These events reinforced the importance of ensuring that protection remains central to political strategies and a common focus for all United Nations actors, in addition to an important area of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations.

58. Peacekeepers must be given the capacity to fulfil their mandates, supported by robust political action at all levels. In this regard, I welcome the continuing efforts to improve training for peacekeepers and I encourage the Security Council and Member States to support these initiatives. We must be realistic, however, in terms of what peacekeepers can achieve in situations of extreme violence, in particular when government forces systematically target civilians. States bear the primary responsibility to protect civilians, and peacekeepers are not a substitute for political engagement to tackle sources of violence.

59. Peacekeepers must recognize their responsibility to act, to the full extent of their mandates and capabilities, to prevent and respond to threats against civilians and must be held accountable for underperformance or non-performance. In this regard, I will accord priority to the implementation of relevant recommendations stemming from, among others, the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and the independent special investigation into the violence in Juba in 2016. I urge Member States to commit themselves to abiding by the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians, endorsed by 40 countries representing nearly half of all deployed peacekeepers, which articulate an effective guide for implementing mandates for the protection of civilians. I also call upon Member States to join me in a collective effort across the United Nations system to detect, control and prevent sexual exploitation and abuse (see A/71/818 and Add.1).

Protection priority III
Prevent forced displacement and pursue durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons

60. Forced displacement has reached record levels, with more than 65 million people displaced by conflict, violence and persecution worldwide. Active hostilities between warring parties, often involving air strikes and shelling in urban areas, are a

[8] The United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry suggested lower figures. See S/2016/1093.

primary cause of displacement. Concerted efforts are needed at the national, regional and global levels to prevent forced displacement and find durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons.

61. Around two thirds of those forcibly displaced around the world are internally displaced persons. Countries with high levels of conflict-induced internal displacement included Afghanistan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Globally, more than 40 per cent of internally displaced persons are children. Many internally displaced persons have been displaced multiple times in their quest for safety. Notwithstanding their overwhelming numbers, internally displaced persons often receive inadequate attention from their Governments and global leaders; they are the silent majority of the forcibly displaced.

62. The total number of refugees has surpassed 21 million for the first time. Almost three quarters of refugees come from just five countries and territories, with the Syrian Arab Republic accounting for the highest number (5 million) followed by Afghanistan, the occupied Palestinian territory, South Sudan and Somalia. Turkey hosts the largest refugee population, followed by Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Uganda. The refugee population in Uganda doubled, mostly in the second half of 2016, as a result of the conflict in South Sudan. These host States have shouldered a disproportionate responsibility in responding to the refugee crisis, taking in millions of refugees from their war-torn neighbours despite the increased demands that this places on their own economies and societies. In doing so, they contribute to conflict management, regional stability and collective security. These States need significantly more international support to cope with the consequences of such massive displacement.

63. Active hostilities, especially in urban areas, are a primary cause of displacement. This is most evident in the Syrian conflict, which has produced some 11.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons. More than 2 million people were displaced within the Syrian Arab Republic in 2016 alone. Hostilities have also displaced many people in Yemen, which had over 2 million internally displaced persons at the end of the year. In Iraq, more than 620,000 people were internally displaced in 2016 alone, including in excess of 120,000 in the last two months of the year during the operation to recapture Mosul. Equally alarming was the new displacement of 660,000 people within Afghanistan, the highest number on record, which coincided with the escalation of hostilities.

64. In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, on average 2,000 people were internally displaced from their homes every day, with the total number of internally displaced persons increasing from 1.6 million to 2.2 million. Some 178,000 people were internally displaced between October and December alone; almost 90 per cent were fleeing active hostilities. There was also significant new displacement in South Sudan, in particular from July when hostilities escalated in Juba and elsewhere. In total, more than 1.85 million people were internally displaced in South Sudan as at the end of the year, including 223,994 sheltered in United Nations sites for the protection of civilians. In addition, some 760,000 people fled the country, bringing the total number of South Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries to more than 1.4 million, including 640,000 in Uganda.

65. Refugees and internally displaced persons were exposed to serious protection risks, including killings, sexual and gender-based violence, torture, forced recruitment, trafficking in persons, early and forced marriage and arbitrary arrest and detention. Children, especially unaccompanied or separated children, are particularly vulnerable. Several attacks on camps or sites for internally displaced persons were reported, including in Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan and the

Syrian Arab Republic. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there was continued concern over the Government's efforts to close such sites at short notice, such as in March and April in Kitchanga, North Kivu, affecting 43,000 internally displaced persons. It is incumbent on States to maintain the civilian and humanitarian character of camps and settlements for refugees and internally displaced persons, so as to ensure that residents are not subject to forced recruitment and do not become military targets. Forced returns, including the forced return of Nigerian refugees from Cameroon, were also a serious concern.

66. Displacement has become protracted in many conflict-affected countries. This results from a combination of factors, including continuing hostilities and insecurity stemming from the lack of political resolution of conflicts and inadequate access to basic services, durable housing and livelihood opportunities. A forthcoming study commissioned by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, entitled "Breaking the impasse", highlights effective practices and provides recommendations to better respond to protracted internal displacement. In particular, it articulates the steps needed to achieve collective outcomes for internally displaced persons over several years, bringing together government, humanitarian and development partners.

67. Important efforts to address forced displacement were made. At the World Humanitarian Summit, it was emphasized that long-term displacement could be tackled through the new way of working, which promotes greater coherence between humanitarian and development actors to reduce vulnerabilities, build the resilience of displaced persons and host communities and promote durable solutions (see A/71/239, para. 31). In the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, Member States committed themselves to a more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting refugees. This is a key element of the comprehensive refugee response framework and will feature in the future global compact on refugees. In the Declaration, Member States confirmed that, in line with the principle of non-refoulement, individuals must not be returned at borders. They also recognized the need for reflection on effective strategies to prevent and reduce internal displacement and ensure adequate protection and assistance for internally displaced persons. In the New Urban Agenda, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, it was stressed that towns and cities affected by displacement must receive support to meet the needs of internally displaced persons and host communities. These are welcome initiatives and I urge all stakeholders to implement their commitments without delay.

Path to protection
My vision for strengthening the protection of civilians in armed conflict

Prevent and end conflict

68. My overarching priority as Secretary-General is to mobilize all stakeholders to prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of crisis, including but not limited to armed conflict. This is the most effective way to protect civilians in the long term. The human and financial costs of pursuing military solutions to conflicts are unacceptable. We need a surge in diplomacy for peace, in partnership with relevant actors, including through the use of my own good offices. Efforts should focus on dialogue and inclusive peace processes that address the parties' grievances and underlying causes of violence, leading to sustainable solutions. This alone will not be enough, however. In the long term, a holistic approach is required to address the root causes of conflict, promote human rights and the rule of law,

strengthen governance and institutions and invest in inclusive and sustainable development.

69. Another key step is to improve early-warning and early-action mechanisms and ensure that we have the capacity and political will to intervene before it is too late. This is the lesson of innumerable conflicts and the driving force behind the Human Rights Up Front initiative. We must also address illicit and irresponsible arms transfers, which enable conflict and undermine protection and peacebuilding efforts. We cannot achieve these objectives working alone or in silos. While the primary responsibility for conflict prevention lies with Member States and the Security Council, a culture of prevention must flow through all aspects of the United Nations work.

Enhance respect for international law and promote good practice by parties to conflict

70. Where we cannot prevent conflict, we must strive to prevent civilian death and suffering in conflict. A key priority is to enhance respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law by encouraging good practice by parties to conflict. Much of the civilian death and suffering that we see in conflict could be avoided if the parties respected their obligations under international law and implemented policies and practical measures to avoid civilian harm in military operations. Enhancing parties' compliance with international law not only prevents and mitigates civilian harm, but also improves the prospects for resolving conflict and building sustainable peace. Systematic accountability for violations is also crucial to provide redress for victims, deter further violations and promote peace and reconciliation. Where parties to conflict persist in seriously violating human rights or international humanitarian law, the Security Council should take decisive action to ensure accountability.

71. During my tenure, I will facilitate a global effort to mobilize Member States, civil society and other stakeholders to enhance respect for international law and strengthen the protection of civilians in conflict. This will include awareness-raising and advocacy, developing and sharing good practices, and research and dialogue on the root causes of parties' behaviour. It will also encompass initiatives to improve data collection and analysis, together with public reporting on the human cost of conflict, which will facilitate evidence-based analysis of trends and patterns of civilian harm. In addition, I will encourage efforts by Member States and regional organizations to develop and implement policies to avoid civilian harm in military operations. These should include pre-conflict planning, guidance on the use of particular weapons and tactics, tracking and analysing the impact of operations on civilians and making amends for civilian harm. Non-State armed groups should also be encouraged to implement practical measures to avoid civilian harm. This will require continued engagement with such groups on humanitarian issues relating to the protection of civilians.

Protect the humanitarian and medical mission and prioritize the protection of civilians in United Nations peace operations

72. Impartial medical care and principled humanitarian action save lives and reduce suffering for millions of people in conflict. As famine threatens the lives and dignity of more than 20 million people in conflict-affected countries, and millions of others struggle to gain access to the goods and services that they need to survive, ensuring rapid, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access must be a priority. I call upon all parties to conflict, in addition to the Security Council, Member States and other relevant actors, to do everything within their power to facilitate humanitarian access and create an enabling environment for humanitarian action. I

further call for specific action to protect medical care in conflict, including by implementing the recommendations submitted to the Council pursuant to resolution 2286 (2016). The norms that protect medical care in conflict are among the first and most fundamental expressions of the spirit driving the protection of civilians agenda, and they demand the highest respect.

73. United Nations peace operations are an indispensable tool to prevent conflict, protect civilians, achieve political solutions and contribute to lasting peace. They must have the political backing and material support that they need to perform these tasks, together with investment in training and capacity-building. Their effectiveness relies largely on a clearly articulated political purpose, which only the Security Council can provide. This must be informed by effective United Nations assessments, including through mechanisms such as the informal expert group on the protection of civilians. Peacekeepers must always fulfil their core obligation to protect when civilian lives are at stake, but protecting civilians requires far more than physical protection by peacekeepers. It is a whole-of-mission endeavour encompassing civilian, military and police functions such as engaging with local communities, mediating disputes, monitoring human rights violations and gathering information to prevent future violence. This must be complemented by robust political engagement at the international level, including by the Council.

Prevent forced displacement and pursue durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons

74. There cannot be sustainable peace, protection or development worldwide when more than 65 million people are displaced by conflict, violence and persecution. We must move beyond perpetually struggling with the consequences of such massive displacement and began to seriously tackle its root causes. This means preventing and resolving conflict, strengthening respect for international law and developing operational policies and practices to protect civilians from hostilities. Fewer civilians would flee if parties to conflict spared them from the effects of hostilities, notably by complying with the international humanitarian law principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. In addition, under international humanitarian law, parties are prohibited from forcibly displacing civilians unless the security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand. We must also ensure that those who flee their homes receive the protection and assistance that they need. In particular, all States must uphold the right of those fleeing persecution and conflict to seek asylum and must ensure that refugees are protected from refoulement. The Security Council should emphasize these obligations and promote accountability for violations.

75. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants represents important progress towards a more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting refugees. I will support Member States to implement their commitments in the coming years, including through the adoption of a global compact on refugees. In parallel, we must redouble our efforts to address the plight of the more than 40 million conflict-induced internally displaced persons. Throughout my tenure, I will work with affected Governments and other stakeholders to reduce internal displacement by 50 per cent by 2030 in a manner that respects the sovereignty of Member States, protects the human rights and dignity of internally displaced persons, promotes durable solutions and allows internally displaced persons and host communities to contribute to sustainable development. The twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, in 2018, offers a unique opportunity for stakeholders to come together and commit themselves to taking specific action.

Unified effort throughout the United Nations system

76. I am determined to ensure a unified effort to prevent crisis and protect civilians in conflict throughout all aspects of United Nations work. This is the very essence of the Human Rights Up Front initiative. Our collective efforts to reform the United Nations peace and security, development and management systems will help to better manage the peace continuum, from prevention and conflict resolution to peacekeeping, peacebuilding and long-term development. The protection of civilians must remain a priority throughout this process. This will require concerted efforts by my special representatives, special envoys, humanitarian and development coordinators and other senior officials. Coordination between peace operations and other United Nations components at the headquarters and field levels, while respecting distinct roles and boundaries, is crucial. We must also strengthen our partnerships with regional organizations. The full participation of women and girls is essential at all stages. We must all work together to help the Security Council and Member States to prevent conflict, protect civilians in conflict and build inclusive, resilient and equitable societies. Ultimately, protection is a responsibility spanning the entire United Nations.

Recommendations

77. Building on the recommendations in previous reports on the protection civilians in armed conflict and in the Agenda for Humanity, I emphasize the importance of the following measures.

Protection priority 1
Enhance respect for international law and promote good practice by parties to conflict

78. I call upon Member States and parties to conflict to develop, implement and share operational policies and practical measures to enhance respect for international humanitarian and human rights law and avoid harm to civilians, with particular attention to the conduct of hostilities in urban areas.

79. I call upon parties to conflict:

(a) To stop the military use of critical civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and places of worship;

(b) To avoid locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas;

(c) To avoid the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas.

80. I call upon Member States:

(a) To join a global effort to promote greater compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law to enhance the protection of civilians;

(b) To ratify or accede to core international instruments aimed at protecting civilians, including the Arms Trade Treaty and similar regional instruments, and ensure that national legislation and policies implement international obligations;

(c) To exert their influence, in particular when participating in military partnerships, to ensure that parties to conflict comply with international law;

(d) To endorse the Safe Schools Declaration;

(e) To engage constructively in efforts to develop a political declaration to address the humanitarian impact of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas;

(f) To support the systematic collection and analysis of information on the protection of civilians, including data disaggregated by sex and age and gender analysis, and ensure that it feeds into conflict analysis, prevention and response;

(g) To adopt the legislative, policy and law enforcement measures necessary to ensure the effective investigation and prosecution of serious violations;

(h) To ratify or accede to the Rome Statute and provide adequate political, technical and financial support to the International Criminal Court.

81. The Security Council should:

(a) Use all tools at its disposal to strengthen the protection of civilians and enhance compliance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law;

(b) Ensure accountability for serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including by, as appropriate, applying targeted measures, supporting national prosecutions and hybrid mechanisms, mandating commissions of inquiry, fact-finding missions and investigation commissions, referring situations to the International Criminal Court and providing consistent support to the Court to enable it to fulfil its mandate.

Protection priority II
Protect the humanitarian and medical mission and accord priority to the protection of civilians in United Nations peace operations

Humanitarian and medical mission

82. I call upon Member States and parties to conflict:

(a) To adopt and implement measures, such as those defined in the recommendations submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2286 (2016), to protect the wounded and sick and medical personnel, facilities and equipment, and share best practices and lessons learned;

(b) To adopt clear, simple and expedited procedures to facilitate rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access.

83. The Security Council should:

(a) Condemn any instances of arbitrary withholding of consent to impartial humanitarian relief operations or depriving civilians of objects indispensable to their survival, including wilfully impeding relief supply and access, and emphasize that such acts constitute violations of international humanitarian law;

(b) Call upon parties to conflict to comply with their obligation to respect and protect humanitarian and medical personnel and objects, condemn direct and indiscriminate attacks against such personnel and objects and call for effective investigations into and accountability for such incidents.

United Nations peace operations

84. I call upon Member States:

(a) To endorse the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians and ensure that military and police personnel provided to peacekeeping operations are fully equipped and trained to effectively implement mandates for the protection of civilians, including mandates to prevent sexual violence in conflict;

(b) To support my initiatives to promote effective and accountable performance throughout the United Nations system, including in the implementation of mandates for the protection of civilians.

85. The Security Council should ensure that the protection of civilians is a core aspect of political strategies for preventing and resolving conflict and that political solutions drive protection mandates in peace operations, including through prioritized and sequenced mandates.

Protection priority III
Prevent forced displacement and pursue durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons

86. I call upon Member States:

(a) To intensify efforts to tackle the root causes of forced displacement by preventing and resolving conflicts and strengthening respect for international law, including in protracted conflict;

(b) To uphold the right to seek asylum and the principle of non-refoulement under international law;

(c) To develop and implement effective strategies, with the support of humanitarian and development agencies as relevant, to ensure the comprehensive protection of refugees and internally displaced persons, promote their self-reliance and resilience, including through education programmes and livelihood opportunities, and work towards durable solutions.

87. The Security Council should:

(a) Condemn unlawful acts of forced displacement by parties to conflict, call for the immediate cessation of such acts and apply targeted measures against the leadership of the parties responsible;

(b) Remind parties to conflict of their obligation to maintain the civilian and humanitarian character of camps and settlements for refugees and internally displaced persons, condemn direct and indiscriminate attacks on such sites and call for effective investigations into and accountability for such incidents.

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Letter dated 10 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information on the work of the "White Helmets" in Syria (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 31, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) P. **Iliichev**
Chargé d'affaires, a.i.

17-08181 (E) 230517 300517

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 10 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF EXTREMISM, CAMBRIDGE

"Syria – Six Years On: From Destruction to Reconstruction.

THE WHITE HELMETS: FACT OR FICTION – INTERVENTION BY VANESSA BEELEY 5/4/2017

SLIDE ONE INFOGRAPH

My name is Vanessa Beeley. I am an independent investigative journalist, writer and photographer based in France. I contribute regularly to various independent media sites such as 21st Century Wire, the Ron Paul Institute, Global research, Mint Press. In 2016 I spent a total of three months in Syria, including Aleppo in August and then in December following in the tracks of the SAA as they liberated East Aleppo from the Nusra Front led armed militant and extremist occupation.

For the last two years I have been conducting an ongoing investigation into the White Helmets, the much promoted, so called, Syrian humanitarian NGO that has recently achieved Hollywood fame through the Oscar, awarded to the Netflix documentary, showcasing White Helmet exploits in Syria. This investigation culminated in my going to Syria to expand my enquiries and research on the ground inside Syria.

Who are the White Helmets according to the White Helmets, created in 2013 [1]

1: "*neutral, impartial, humanitarian NGO, with no official affiliation to any political or military actor and a commitment to render services to any in need regardless of sect or political affiliation*"

2: Motto is "To save one life is to save all humanity" so non-sectarian and operating without bias

3: They are unarmed

4: They have saved 82,000 lives since they began working in Syria from end of 2013/early 2014

5: They are Syrian and the impression is given that the White Helmets are the primary USAR organisation operating inside Syria

My in-depth investigation into the legitimacy of these claims have raised some very disturbing anomalies, that have never been identified or raised by the mainstream media in the UK, EU or US, with some very minor exceptions. Why not? I will now run through my findings but I must emphasize that I am far from being alone in raising the following concerns, many of my colleagues in independent media and NGOs fostering peaceful resolution to the Syrian conflict have conducted their own analysis and drawn very similar conclusions:

1: The White Helmets receive funding from UK Foreign Office, curiously through the Conflict, Stability and Security fund for NON-HUMANITARIAN AID [2]

"the total value of funds committed between June 2013 and the end of the current financial year (31 March 2016) is £19.7m" in a statement made by the Foreign & Commonwealth office. [3]

At the end of September 2016 Boris Johnson pledged a further £ 32m.

The US has funded the WH a disclosed $ 23 m via their USAID/Chemonics networks this was admitted by Mark Toner of the US State Dept. [4]

A look at various other EU government websites, reveal that:

Holland ($ 4.5m), Germany ($ 7.87m) Japan (undisclosed sum from the Intl Cooperation Agency), Denmark (undisclosed sum). The White Helmets also receive equipment and supplies from various EU member states.

This funding is concealed behind the generic heading of "Emergency Health and Relief Support to the Population Affected by the Crisis in Syria", through the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG-ECHO), formerly known as the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office. [5]

More recently Qatar has also confirmed funding of the White Helmets. Qatar is known to be funding many of the extremist factions operating inside Syria.

All governments funding the White Helmets have publicly declared an interest in removing President Assad and effecting "regime change" in Syria and must surely compromise their proclaimed neutrality.

2: The White Helmets were established in **Turkey**, *not* in Syria. They are largely trained in Turkey and Jordan, not inside Syria. They were established in March 2013 by a British ex-military officer, James Le Mesurier with $ 300k seed funding from Japan, the U.K., and the U.S. [6]

3: The White Helmets are embedded exclusively in areas of Syria occupied by listed terrorist organisations including Nusra Front and ISIS, along with various associated 'moderate rebels' such as Ahrar al Sham and Nour Al Din Zinki. All these groups & sub-groups are responsible for carrying out ethnic cleansing pogroms and documented atrocities against the Syrian people. Nour Al Din Zinki videoed themselves beheading 12 year-old Palestinian child, Abdullah Issa in July 2016. Like the White Helmets, the majority of these armed groups receive funding, training, equipment and support from the United States and its Coalition partners, particularly the Gulf states. A fact that is extensively documented. [7]

4: During the situation in Madaya, Syria in January 2016, the White Helmets in Idlib were photographed attending demonstrations & carrying banners that were calling for the "burning and destruction" of the towns of Kafarya and Foua. These are two Idlib villages under full siege by Ahrar Al Sham & Nusra Front (Al Qaeda in Syria) since March 2015, partial siege since 2012. The siege ensures the starvation of villagers and daily shelling and sniping by Ahrar Al Sham and Nusra Front has killed over 1750 civilians during this time.

SLIDE TWO: KAFARYA AND FOUA

5: There is video and photographic evidence available that clearly shows the White Helmets participating in Nusra Front operations in the areas occupied or taken over by this organisation. There is one particularly damning video taken during the Nusra Front violent and brutal attack on Idlib City in March 2015. In this video White Helmet operatives are seen clearly beating a Syrian civilian prisoner of Nusra Front

and circling the prisoner, mingling with heavily armed and hostile Nusra Front militia. [8]

6: May 5th 2015 the White Helmets were filmed "clearing up" after a Nusra Front execution of a civilian prisoner in Northern Aleppo. Although the official statement from the White Helmets claims they arrived after the execution, the speed with which they appear (in video) immediately after the prisoner has been shot in the head, demonstrates clearly that they were on the scene and did nothing to prevent it. [9]

SLIDE THREE EXECUTION

7: Various other White Helmet operatives have posted videos of the torture and execution of Syrian Arab Army prisoners or to their social media pages with celebratory comments. One such operative, **Muawiya Hassan Agha**, is alleged to have been "sacked" from the White Helmets, for his participation in one such execution of 2 SAA prisoners of war in Khan Touman, S Aleppo May 2016, a clear violation of all ethics surrounding an "impartial" NGO. However, despite various demands, an official statement has never been issued by the White Helmets. Neither have they publicly condemned the torture and execution of prisoners of war, an act that contravenes the Geneva Convention. Within 3 weeks of his alleged sacking, Agha appeared in White Helmet photographs as one of their photographers. [10]

8: The leader of the White Helmets, Raed Saleh, was deported from Dulles Airport in the US, April 2016. No real explanation was ever given for this decision. Mark Toner of the US State Department fielded questions from media but did (i) Admit to funding the group with $ 23m and (ii) suggest that Raed Saleh might have "extremist connections". Raed Saleh has recently been allowed back into the US in September 2016 and spoke at the UN New York with the Dutch Mission, he was involved in the closed sessions with Syrian activists and then secretary of State, John Kerry, published by the NYT. [11]

8a: While on the subject of Raed Saleh, who is the leader and global representative of the White Helmets, he is a close colleague of another White Helmet leader in Khan Sheikhoun, Idlib, Mustafa Al Haj Yussef. Yussef has been with the WH since 2013 and is photographed in Idlib with Raed Saleh. Yussef's social media accounts reveal the following: [12]

SLIDE FOUR RAED SALEH & YUSSEF

- He has called for the unity of extremist factions such as Nusra Front and Ahrar al Sham
- He has clearly professed allegiance and support for Ahrar Al Sham, responsible for the massacres in the Alawite village of Al Zaraa May 2016
- He publicly calls for the shelling of civilians in Damascus during the 2014 elections.
- He advocates the extreme of executing civilians during Ramadan if they fail to fast
- He endorses the looting of SAA houses after their capture or execution which he also publicly calls for.

If the head of the Red Cross were committing such ethical breaches, we would surely be calling for a full investigation.

SLIDE FIVE REAL SYRIA CIVIL DEFENCE

9: The White Helmets are also referred to as the 'Syria Civil Defence.' However, there is an existing Syria Civil Defence. **The REAL Syria Civil Defence was established in Syria in 1953**. I met with crews in Aleppo, Lattakia, Tartous and Damascus during my four weeks in Syria. The REAL Syria Civil Defence were founder members of the ICDO [International Civil Defence Organisation] which is affiliated with the UN, WHO, OCHA, Red Cross, Red Crescent. The REAL Syria Civil Defence are still paying annual subscriptions to the ICDO of 20,000 Swiss Francs $ 20k. The REAL Syria Civil Defence operated in both government and armed militia held areas up to 2016 when it was decided they should only work in the Syrian government held areas for their own protection as the armed groups had been deliberately targeting their crew members when on a rescue mission in occupied areas. However, it must be noted that the REAL Syria Civil defence working in Syrian government held areas, actually service 80% of the Syrian population inside Syria, including the over 6m IDPs who have also fled to the government held towns and cities. [13]

SLIDE SIX MAP

The Real Syria Civil Defence are recruited and trained inside Syria & have been in existence for 60 years.

When the White Helmets were making a concerted bid to win the Nobel Peace Prize last year, supported almost universally by mainstream media in the UK, the internet link to the RSCD at the ICDO was mysteriously re-routed to the White Helmets. I called the ICDO and spoke with their representative who assured me that it was an admin mistake, during our conversation the following statements were made by this representative, there is a full audio recording of this conversation available. [14]

1: The White Helmets are not recognised by the ICDO & are not members of the ICDO

2: The White Helmets are not even "concretely" a civil defence organisation

3: The White Helmets is the "wrong" civil defence

4: The only civil defence recognised by the ICDO and the UN is the "official" Syria Civil Defence

Western public perception has been deceived into believing the White Helmets are the only Syria Civil Defence, thus "disappearing" over 4000 REAL Syria Civil defence workers.

10: August 2016 interviews with the REAL Syria Civil Defence, I was informed that the Nusra Front and associated 'moderate rebels' who invaded areas such as East Aleppo, Raqqa, Deir Ezzor, Idlib, massacred crew members of the REAL Syria Civil Defence and stole the majority of their equipment in those areas, including fire engines and ambulances. Many of these armed groups then became White Helmet operatives. Testimony from the REAL Syria Civil Defence suggested that the White Helmets are acting as support for Nusra Front, ISIS and other heavily armed militia described as "moderate rebels". [15]

Aleppo August 2016, I conducted a short video interview with Dr Bassem Hayak of the Aleppo Medical Association, based in West Aleppo. Hayak told me that his family, trapped in East Aleppo had never seen the White Helmets and Hayak said even the UN agencies still operating in East Aleppo such as the SARC had not encountered the WH.

This testimony was further confirmed by the civilian statements I gathered while in East Aleppo during liberation, visiting each district as it was retaken by the SAA.

All civilians I spoke to, perhaps over 50 from all districts, were confused when I asked them if they knew the White Helmets. When I asked if they knew of a civil defence, their immediate response was "yes, yes Nusra Front civil defence". All these unedited interviews are available on my YouTube channel and in my reports. I was told that the White Helmets did not help civilians, they were a support group for Nusra Front, Ahrar Al Sham, Nour al Din Zinki etc. Some told me they were thieves, that they would steal from the victims bodies. One man told Lizzie Phelan of RT that they killed his baby girl by injecting air into her veins. I was told no medical treatment was available for civilians during the five year long occupation. [16]

Pierre Le Corf, a young Frenchman working as an independent humanitarian volunteer in Aleppo, filmed the main White Helmet centre in East Aleppo after the WH had left in the buses that evacuated the armed groups including Nusra Front. His film shows us that the White Helmet centre, the main one in East Aleppo, was integrated into the Nusra Front compound [Al Qaeda in Syria] and that this White Helmet centre was adorned with a variety of graffitti and flags affirming the White Helmet affiliation to the various terrorist groups. He also found documents proving that the White Helmets were working directly for Nusra Front and the various other extremist groups. [17]

The video is also available on my YouTube channel.

SLIDE SEVEN SWEDHR

11: On multiple occasions, the White Helmets have been exposed staging attack scenes for both photo and video, recycling images of children and incidents from the conflict in Syria, to support their narrative, editing video which misrepresents the scene in question, using images from a previous incident or even fake images altogether. There are many documented instances of this but perhaps the most recent and the most disturbing is the investigation by SWEDHR who analysed the WH report on the alleged Sarmin chlorine gas attacks in March 2015. The WH video was presented at the UN in another closed door session instigated by then US Ambassador, Samantha Power, and "reduced the UN officials to tears".

The video depicts three naked, lifeless children being treated for the alleged chlorine gas inhalation. The youngest child has a hypodermic syringe inserted into his chest and moved around erratically before being withdrawn.

The SWEDHR examined the video from a professional medical & ethical perspective and came to the following shocking conclusions:

- *"After examination of the video material, I found that the measures inflicted upon those children, some of them lifeless, are bizarre, non-medical, non-lifesaving, and even counterproductive in terms of life-saving purposes of children". – Dr Leif Elinder*
- *Intracutaneous injection with adrenalin procedure ... is not correctly performed and would have resulted in the death of the child, if not already dead*
- *In studying the film closely SWEDHR concluded that the liquid level in the syringe does not change, therefore the child is being stabbed with the syringe needle for no reason*
- ***"I think that even from the very brief video, we can see that this child has a reduced level of consciousness: he does not vocalize, does not open his eyes,***

and his only movements are to turn his head to one side and to open his mouth before he stops breathing altogether. This looks like respiratory depression, rather than injury to the lungs; he appears to be too sleepy to breathe. I think the most likely diagnosis is a drug overdose causing reduced level of consciousness and respiratory depression. Opiates are the most likely class of drug to cause this. Chlorine causes acute inhalation injury, but does not (in any of the sources I have read) cause reduced level of consciousness; the victim struggles to breathe until the end."

The implications of this conclusion by a recognised organisation of medical experts are horrifying. Did the White Helmets use already dead children as propaganda props? Why has this investigation not been aired by any one of the mainstream media? [18] [18a]

SLIDE EIGHT BODIES

12: The White Helmets have been filmed describing Syrian Arab Army bodies as "trash" and one particular video shows them standing on top of a pile of SAA soldier's bodies, whose boots have been removed or stolen. The White Helmets talk about the bodies in pejorative terms and they flick a victory V sign as the truck drives off.

Remembering, of course, their claims of neutrality.

SLIDE NINE ARMED WH

13: There are multiple images documented and archived that reveal the White Helmet operatives carrying arms or posing with arms alongside the various armed militia including Nusra Front. There is also further footage from Idlib, March 2015, showing White Helmet operatives celebrating alongside Nusra Front militia after the massacre of Syrian Arab Army forces and Syrian civilians during this attack. [19]

14: Adulatory publicity about the White Helmets is the result of a multimillion dollar sustained commercial marketing and social media promotional campaign via a network that is funded by George Soros and various US, UK and Middle Eastern enterprises. The PR network is as follows: Soros → Purpose → Avaaz (campaign) → White Helmets and is detailed by Cory Morningstar and Rick Sterling in their respective articles. [20]

15: Analysts have observed, the White Helmets achieve on average 4 or 5 videos per day, depicting their heroic rescue efforts. The REAL Syria Civil Defence have evaluated these videos and cast doubt as to the White Helmets being true first responders or USAR (Urban Search and Rescue) experts. They pinpointed various anomalies (i) the equipment used is too heavyweight for the delicate operation of finding bodies beneath collapsed buildings (ii) the treatment of injured bodies is dangerous, they are flung onto stretchers with no back support or neck brace, for example. Many of the paramedic procedures shown on film are also deemed questionable. The White Helmets rarely travel without a sizeable camera team or crew of mobile phone cameramen. The REAL Syria Civil Defence do not, they are too busy to consider PR.

The White Helmets claim to have saved over 82,000 lives, however there is no documentation of these lives, no names, no records. With all the logistical and financial support being received by this group, is it too much to ask?

SLIDE TEN SUMMARY

In summary, this evidence points to the White Helmets being a U.S. U.K. EU creation established in 2013, and not an independent NGO. It is a multi-million dollar US UK Coalition funded organisation. It is funded by governments involved & invested in the Syrian conflict. No one can rightly call this a grass-roots Syrian organisation.

There is an existing Syria Civil Defence that is being ignored by western media. Running parallel there is a vast fund raising network constructed to collect money which is funnelled into the White Helmets designed to replace the authentic Syria Civil Defence in the minds of the western public. The REAL Syria Civil Defence is crippled by US and EU sanctions, the White Helmets have never been affected by these sanctions, their supply chain via Turkey is unbroken.

Conservative estimates put White Helmets funding at over $150 million thus far, which is far more than any real NGO would ever require in a decade, much less 3 years. Tax payers in funding countries have a right to know precisely what and who their money is funding.

The evidence demonstrates that the White Helmets are sectarian not impartial. They are in many instances, armed not unarmed. The promotional material produced for the White Helmets such as the recent Netflix documentary film, is often produced outside of Syria, usually in Turkey, and with any field footage supplied by the White Helmets. Who has verified the authenticity of this footage, or photographs?

The White Helmets are feeding images of "humanitarian disaster" and "war crimes" to the very same western nations who are funding them, and to politicians and media outlets who are using these visual narratives, with the explicit purpose of lobbying for a U.S. U.K. Foreign Office proposed, "Safe Zone" or "No Fly Zone" in Syria. Recent history teaches us, this No Fly Zone policy carries with it the threat of reducing Syria to a Libya-style "failed state."

Effectively, this alleged, impartial, neutral, apolitical, organisation actively campaigns for an escalation of war in Syria. This alone, should disqualify the White Helmets as a humanitarian organisation.

One of the funders of the Netflix Documentary withdrew considerable funding from the project in October 2016. The Threshold Foundation published a statement giving reasons for the withdrawal: [21]

"We have since learned that the subject of the film (the White Helmets organization) and others involved in this film are advocating for strategies that could entail international military force and escalated violence."

Many of the White Helmet 'campaigns' have since been discredited as "war fiction", and yet they are being used by the UK US Coalition as justification for continuing and increased economic and diplomatic sanctions, sanctions which are a collective punishment on the Syrian people, while the US coalition persists with equipping and arming the various militia on the ground in Syria, including Nusra Front (al Qaeda in Syria).

This only serves to ensure even more suffering and bloodshed inside Syria and delays the possibility of any real, peaceful resolution. It is incumbent upon us to ensure a full enquiry into the White Helmets as a part of the ongoing peace process.

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United Nations A/71/901–S/2017/416

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
17 May 2017

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-first session
Agenda items 41 and 73 (a)

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Question of Cyprus

Oceans and the law of the sea: oceans and the law of the sea

Letter dated 10 May 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

With reference to the letter dated 12 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey addressed to the Secretary-General (A/71/875-S/2017/321), I have the honour to state the following:

Greece rejects in their entirety the Turkish allegations contained in the above-mentioned letter regarding the definition of the outer limits of Turkey's continental shelf in the Eastern Mediterranean as unsubstantiated, unfounded and devoid of any legal basis.

Such allegations totally disregard the ipso facto and ab initio sovereign rights of other States, including Greece, in the maritime area of the Eastern Mediterranean west of meridian 32°16′18″E. These rights derive from the international law of the sea. It has to be recalled that, under both customary and conventional international law, Greek islands, including those in the said area, are entitled to maritime zones of their own (continental shelf and/or exclusive economic zone), as any other land territory.

In this respect, Greece wishes to reiterate its position on these issues as set out on numerous occasions, including in the letters dated 23 May and 8 December 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Greece addressed to the Secretary-General (A/70/900-S/2016/474 and A/71/675-S/2016/1043, respectively) and note verbale No. 974 of the Permanent Mission of Greece, dated 8 May 2012.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 41 and 73 (a), and of the Security Council, and published in the next Law of the Sea Bulletin.

(*Signed*) Catherine **Boura**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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United Nations S/2017/417

Security Council

Distr.: General
11 May 2017

Original: English

Identical letters dated 10 May 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am writing to you to express our concern, and request the Security Council's assistance, with a matter of utmost importance to the State of Israel.

As I have written to the Council before, the deadly wave of terror attacks against my country has continued unabated. Over the last month alone, there have been eight such attacks, including the fatal stabbing of a British exchange student in Jerusalem.

While such attacks have been condemned by countries and individuals of good conscience around the world, too many societies still promote terrorism. In fact, the Palestinian Authority has instituted a particularly egregious form of support for terror.

According to Palestinian Authority laws and regulations, every terrorist arrested, tried and imprisoned receives monthly financial payments. It is estimated that over 7 per cent of their annual budget is spent on supporting these terrorists.

A Palestinian terrorist who murders innocent civilians and is sentenced to over 30 years in prison receives over US$3,000 a month. If the murderer is married, his spouse receives an additional payment and, if they have children, the stipend is increased even more.

The more Israelis killed, the longer the terrorist is sentenced to prison, the higher the payment the terrorist receives from the Palestinian Authority. This policy encourages terrorism, incites violence and prevents peace. In fact, many of the terrorists have admitted that this financial incentive was a consideration in their decision to commit acts of terror. Put simply, this is official Palestinian blood money, rewarding terrorists who murder Jews.

Since its inception, the international community has donated billions of dollars to the Palestinian Authority. These funds are intended to assist the Palestinians in building better lives for their people, educating their children and ensuring the health and well-being of their elderly.

Donor countries should not accept a situation where their foreign aid is exploited by the Palestinian Authority to reward terrorists.

Last week, all Israelis bowed their heads, honouring the memories of our fallen heroes on Memorial Day for the Fallen Soldiers of Israel and Victims of Terrorism. Since the onset of the modern Zionist movement and its intent on

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returning Jewish sovereignty to our ancient homeland, 4,128 innocent lives have been taken by hate-filled terrorists.

Israel wants nothing more than to live in peace and security with all of our neighbours. If the Palestinians seek the same goal, then their first step must be to stop the glorification and support of terrorists. Ending the payments to convicted terrorists is not only an obligation of the Palestinian Authority, but an act of justice and morality which must be demanded by all members of the international community.

I call upon the Security Council to strongly condemn this ongoing support and glorification of terrorists by the Palestinian Authority.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Danny **Danon**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

United Nations A/71/903–S/2017/418

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
19 May 2017

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-first session
Agenda item 108
Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Letter dated 11 May 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith a press statement released by the Permanent Mission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to the United Nations on 11 May 2017 with regard to the criminal state-sponsored terrorism plots against the supreme leadership of the DPRK, which have recently been disclosed (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 108, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Ja** Song Nam
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

17-08179 (E) 300517

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Annex to the letter dated on 11 May 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Press statement of the Permanent Mission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations with regard to the criminal state-sponsored terrorism plots against the DPRK supreme leadership, which have recently been disclosed

The Permanent Mission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations issues the following information regarding a hideous terrorists' conspiracy that was uncovered, in which the Central Intelligence Agency of the U.S. and the Intelligence Service of south Korea infiltrated a terrorist into the DPRK on the basis of covert and meticulous preparations to commit state terrorism against the supreme leadership of the DPRK by use of biochemical substance.

It is widely known that the U.S. has staged ever larger nuclear war exercises against the DPRK for the last 2 months with massive deployment of all kinds of nuclear assets, including nuclear carriers, into the Korean peninsula along with special forces for "decapitation operation" aimed at "elimination of the supreme leadership".

The fact that the U.S. fearlessly contrives terror stratagems to eliminate our supreme leadership, together with the south Korean authorities, going as far as to take extreme military adventure, is the clear-cut evidence that the U.S. is the mastermind of undermining international peace and security and the ringleader of international terrorism.

The Mini try of State Security solemnly declared that it will crush out to the last one the organizer, conspirator and followers of the hideous state terrorism by ransacking every corner and every part of the earth, in reflection of the will of the army and people of the DPRK.

The heinous crime, which was uncovered and smashed in the DPRK, is a kind of terrorism against not only the DPRK but the justice and conscience of humankind and an act of mangling the future of humankind, and therefore all the countries should wage a joint struggle to put an end to all sorts of inhumane plots, arbitrariness and evil-doings that ruthlessly trample down the desire for peace and stability.

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (General Assembly resolution 60/288, adopted 8 September 2006) stipulates in a preambular paragraph that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purposes, constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

Furthermore it is noted in the Counter-Terrorism Strategy that the acts, methods and practices of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations are activities aimed at the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy, threatening territorial integrity and the security of states and that the international community should take the necessary steps to enhance cooperation to prevent and combat terrorism.

Article 1, paragraph 1 of the Charter of the United Nations makes it clear that in order to maintain international peace and security, effective collective measures should be taken for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace.

The United Nations and the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the United Nations Member States will have to respond actively with support to the Korean-style anti-terrorist attack, including targeted at the punishment of criminals.

To help the United Nations Member States understand, attached herewith is the statement of the spokesperson of the Ministry of State Security of the DPRK dated 5 May 2017 (see enclosure).

Enclosure

Statement by the spokesperson of the Ministry of State Security of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of 5 May 2017 with regard to the criminal state-sponsored terrorism plots against the DPRK supreme leadership, which have recently been disclosed

The last-ditch effort of the hostile forces, taken aback by the strong spirit of the DPRK dashing towards the final victory of the cause of Juche revolution, has gone beyond the limits after reaching the extreme phase.

The recent hysteria about "beheading operation" and "pre-emptive attack", openly staged by the U.S. imperialists and the south Korean puppet military warmongers at the doorstep of the DPRK, is just the tip of the iceberg of those moves.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the U.S. and the Intelligence Service (IS) of south Korea, hotbed of evils in the world, hatched a vicious plot to hurt the supreme leadership of the DPRK and those acts have been put into the extremely serious phase of implementation after crossing the threshold of the DPRK.

A hideous terrorists' group, which the CIA and the IS infiltrated into the DPRK on the basis of covert and meticulous preparations to commit state-sponsored terrorism against the supreme leadership of the DPRK by use of biochemical substance, has been recently detected.

The murderous demons of the IS, who conspired with the CIA, ideologically corrupted and bribed a DPRK citizen surnamed Kim, a former worker in the timber industrial branch in the Khabarovsk Territory of Russia in June 2014, and turned him into a terrorist full of repugnance and revenge against the supreme leadership of the DPRK.

They hatched a plot of letting human scum Kim commit bomb terrorism targeting the supreme leadership during events at the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun and at a military parade and public procession after his return home from abroad.

They told him that assassination by use of biochemical substances, including radioactive substance and nano poisonous substance, is the best method that does not require access to the target, their lethal results will appear after 6 or 12 months, biochemical substance can be added in cooperation with the CIA if one single correct information is obtained, the component of terrorism-purposed biochemical substance is the know-how of the CIA and it is only the CIA that can produce such substance, and that hardware, supplies and funds needed for committing terrorism against the supreme leadership will completely be borne by the IS. Then they handed him over a total of 20,000 U.S. dollars, on two occasions, and a satellite transmitter-receiver and let him get versed in it.

In the end, they gave him assurances of IS that they would keep his duty concerning terrorism against the supreme leadership as secret, and infiltrated him, after appeasing and blackmailing him that his families would not be scot-free in case he fails to carry out the duty.

In January, May, August and September of 2016, IS agents had satellite contacts with Kim, who resided in Pyongyang. The IS agents gave instructions to choose and report the most effective and safe method with high probability of success, while presenting him various terrorist methods using biochemical substances along with operational code of terrorism against the supreme leadership.

the ways of bribing an object who would directly carry out the terrorist act and ways of entering the grounds of events.

On 12 August 2016 they gave him an instruction to collect and send as much information as possible concerning the surrounding environment of event ground where celebrations are held frequently, the guard situation there and orders observed at times of events, saying that once concrete and detailed data are given, they would study the most reasonable way in cooperation with the CIA.

Urging him to set up an overseas liaison centre for the safe introduction of equipment, materials and funds for the terrorist acts, they financed him a total of 100,000 U.S. dollars, on two occasions, for setting up the centre and bribing terrorist accomplices.

In March and April last, an IS agent, Jo Ki Chol, and his secret agent, Xu Guanghai, Director General of the Qingdao NAZCA Trade Co. Ltd., met the terrorist accomplice in Dandong, China, and handed him over a new satellite transmitter-receiver and 50,000 U.S. dollars. They signed a "contract" on setting up the overseas liaison centre and let the necessary equipment and materials be introduced as the first instalment in early May.

On 7 April, a guy surnamed Han, chief of the IS team, taught Kim the way of bribing terrorist accomplices, saying that "even the U.S. CIA uses gradual engagement with due consideration given to the greed and mentality of persons depending on which class and strata they belong to" and told him to use it as a reference in engaging terrorist accomplices to be infiltrated to the event ground.

On 4 November 2016 and on 13, 17 and 20 April 2017, they let Kim know that they officially confirmed the types of biochemical substance and hardware to be used for committing a terrorist act against the supreme leadership and requested it from the CIA, and instructed him to restudy the "creed" of the terrorist executor and reconfirm his state of "brainwashing" and report to them about it. They also repeatedly instructed him to take the best measure for the examination and preparations for the terrorist operation, as there can be such catastrophic incident as a war once the fact about terrorist means and funds provided by the IS is known.

The chief of the south Korean puppet Intelligence Service, Ri Pyong Ho, praised the terrorist as a "very valuable existence for the nation and 'IS'" and directly organized the terrorist operation and let the chief of the IS team, Han, and agent, Jo Ki Chol, take the lead in executing it. The puppet forces gave the terrorist more than 80 instructions for the execution of the operation.

Recently, the CIA and the IS actively spread the story about "emergency situation in the north" while trumpeting about advantages of terrorism by use of biochemical substances, as such way can minimize the adverse effect on the executor and the back-stage manipulator and help evade retaliation against the assailant side and international denunciation. Lurking behind the story was the heinous plot that has been pushed forward in top secrecy.

The DPRK Ministry of State Security clarifies as follows, upon authorization, since the hysteria of the U.S. and the south Korean puppet intelligence institution aimed to hurt the dignity of the DPRK supreme leadership has reached the dangerous phase, which can no longer be overlooked:

1. We will ferret out and mercilessly destroy to the last one the terrorists of the U.S. CIA and the puppet IS of south Korea targeting the dignity of the DPRK supreme leadership.

We do not view the recent hideous crime just as an act of encroachment on the security and sovereignty of the state that can be committed by dishonest hostile forces.

The recent case was the most vicious challenge and the declaration of a war aimed to hurt the mental mainstay that all the Korean people absolutely trust and repose and to eclipse the eternal sun of the DPRK. It is the fixed will of the army and people of the DPRK that they can never tolerate even dreaming about such a crime.

Criminals going hell-bent to realize such a pipe dream cannot survive on this land even a moment. This is a stern punishment made on behalf of the human conscience and in the name of all Koreans.

The Ministry of State Security, whose mission is to safeguard the leader, the social system and the people, will ferret out to the last one the organizer, conspirator and followers of the recent hideous state-sponsored terrorism, even by ransacking the whole earth, in reflection of the will of the army and people of the DPRK, burning their hearts with hatred and wrath against the hideous murderous devils, no matter at which corner of the planet they may be.

2. Korean-style anti-terrorist attack will be commenced from this moment to sweep away the intelligence and plot-breeding organizations of the U.S. imperialists and the puppet clique, the most mean and brutal hideous terrorist group in the world.

Even though we wipe out all those villains involved in the recent hideous state-sponsored terrorism, there is no vouch that the enemies would stop manoeuvring as long as the chieftains and the plot-breeding bases remain.

It is not a secret that the U.S. imperialists and the puppet group of traitors are getting all the more reckless with each passing day and their moves are spearheaded against the supreme headquarters of the Korean revolution.

It is as clear as noonday that such heinous crimes targeting the supreme headquarters of the Korean revolution would continue to be attempted, as long as the U.S. imperialists and the south Korean puppet group of traitors remain unchanged in their hostile policy towards the DPRK, and the CIA and IS are running amok as a spearhead in executing the policy.

Therefore, it is our determination to root out all the dens of plot and trick like CIA and IS, the source of all evils in the world, and a series of more powerful our-style anti-terrorism striking actions will begin immediately.

3. All the countries and peoples of the world that value justice and peace should resolutely turn out in the sacred struggle to terminate the heinous terrorist act committed by the U.S., kingpin of terrorism and chieftain of plot, and the south Korean puppet group of traitors.

The present international situation proves that terrorism is a common enemy to humankind and the world would have no moment of peace unless terrorism is eradicated.

The bloody terrorist acts of CIA and IS backed by the U.S., the empire of evil, in different parts of the world, surpass terrorism which is said to be perpetrated by "Islamic State" forces.

Nevertheless, the U.S. imperialists and the south Korean puppet group of traitors have often brought charges of "terrorism" against anti-U.S. states and resorted to unprecedentedly hideous terrorism, without hesitation, under the pretexts

of "anti-terrorism war", "opposition to biochemical weapons", "sponsor of terrorism", etc.

The heinous crime, which was recently uncovered and smashed in the DPRK, is a kind of terrorism against not only the DPRK but the justice and conscience of humankind and an act of mangling the future of humankind.

The world free from fear of terrorism is no more than a daydream, as long as there exist in it such groups of bloodthirsty felons as CIA and IS, common enemies hoodwinking and trifling with humankind and outrageous destroyers of the earth.

The honest peace-loving peoples of the world should wage a joint struggle to put an end to all sorts of inhumane plots, arbitrariness and evil-doings that ruthlessly trample down their desire for peace and stability.

The U.S. and the south Korean puppet group of traitors should clearly see their dirty looks as bloodstained homicidal maniac and make an apology to the DPRK for their atrocious state-terrorism and inhumane crime and immediately put the criminals to the death penalty.

If they continue to make challenges with disregard for the DPRK's warning and common desire of humankind, they are bound to meet nothing but the most miserable end in history.

United Nations A/71/902–S/2017/419

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
25 May 2017
English
Original: French

General Assembly
Seventy-first session
Agenda item 28
Report of the Security Council

Security Council
Seventy-second year

Letter dated 10 May 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to convey the following:

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission sent you a letter, dated 27 April 2017, concerning the question of the Moroccan Sahara (see S/2017/405, annex).

Firstly, I would like to recall the triumphant and historic return of Morocco to its natural institutional family, the African Union, thanks to the active support of the overwhelming majority of African countries. Its return, which was decided by consensus during the African Union Summit in January 2017, was warmly welcomed by the entire international community.

The return of Morocco to the African Union will strengthen South-South cooperation among African countries; increase support for African Union strategies for the continent's economic, social and sustainable development; aid the fight against terrorism; and enhance cooperation for sustaining peace, stability, good-neighbourliness and unity of African countries.

On the question of the Moroccan Sahara, the Kingdom of Morocco reiterates its position, which has remained unchanged for decades and has already been transmitted officially to your predecessors, to the Security Council and to the General Assembly, that this issue falls within the exclusive remit of the United Nations, namely the Security Council. The regional dispute over the Moroccan Sahara is considered by the Council under Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations on the pacific settlement of disputes.

Consequently, Morocco reaffirms its categorical opposition to any involvement, in any form whatsoever, of the African Union in the question of the Moroccan Sahara and to any exchange, interaction or contact on this issue between the United Nations, its Secretariat or its bodies and the African Union, its bodies or its representatives, for the following objective reasons:

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- The United Nations assumed exclusive responsibility for dealing with the question of the Moroccan Sahara following the failure of the Organization of African Unity to resolve the dispute.

- The process of negotiations aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable political solution to the question of the Moroccan Sahara is conducted under the exclusive authority of the Security Council, under the auspices of the Secretary-General and with the assistance of his Personal Envoy.

- Successive Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2351 (2017), adopted on 28 April 2017, make no reference to the African Union. Those resolutions rightly confer no role or mandate whatsoever to the African Union, or to that organization's Peace and Security Council, in the political negotiations led by the United Nations.

- The Kingdom of Morocco is resolutely committed to cooperating with the African Union on all issues, with the sole exception of the question of the Moroccan Sahara. The reason for this exception is that, for many years, the African Union has blatantly adopted a stance in favour of the other parties. In doing so it has departed from the requirement to remain neutral on this issue and has fully adopted their assertions.

- It is hardly conceivable that the African Union Commission is unaware that, in every Security Council resolution on the Moroccan Sahara since resolution 1754 (2007), the Council has welcomed the "serious and credible Moroccan efforts to move the process forward towards resolution" through the Moroccan autonomy proposal.

- The position of the African Union, which seeks to revive outdated plans that were considered inapplicable by the United Nations and were disregarded by the Security Council, is contrary to the resolutions in which the Council calls for a negotiated and mutually acceptable political solution, on the basis of realism and a spirit of compromise.

- Moreover, its position is at odds with that of two thirds of the members of the African Union which do not recognize the so-called "Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic".

- The Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, a post that, since its establishment, has been occupied exclusively by Algerian diplomats, echoes the views of the other parties and is conducting an ongoing aggressive and hostile campaign against the Kingdom of Morocco.

- The reports of the African Union Commission and the resulting communiqués issued by its Peace and Security Council demonstrate a flagrant bias on the question of the Sahara. A simple comparison between the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/307) and the report of the African Union Commission on the question of the Sahara highlights discrepancies in terms of content, approach and treatment of developments in the case.

- The Secretary-General's report focuses on recent developments and the search for a negotiated political solution. In contrast, the report of the African Union Commission remains mired in the past and adopts an approach based on conflict and confrontation. Moreover, its biased and unbalanced content advocates a specific position. There is a similar discrepancy with regard to the role of neighbouring States, in particular Algeria. While the Secretary-General's report states that "Algeria and Mauritania can and should make important contributions to this process", the Commission's report makes no mention of any role or any responsibility of Algeria in the dispute.

- The Organization of African Unity prejudged the outcome of the political negotiations conducted under the exclusive authority of the Security Council by admitting, within its membership, a self-proclaimed entity that has no attribute of sovereignty and is not recognized by the United Nations or by any other regional or subregional organization.

Furthermore, and contrary to the misleading interpretations of the other parties, the return of Morocco to the African Union can in no way be interpreted as recognition of the so-called "Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic", neither from the point of view of international law nor on the basis of United Nations practice. Morocco will never recognize that entity. The overwhelming majority of States members of the African Union do not recognize it either.

With regard to the meeting of the Peace and Security Council held on 20 March 2017, which is mentioned in the letter from the Chairperson of the Commission, I should like to emphasize the following:

- The other parties have a habit of stepping up their manoeuvring the day before the annual meeting of the Security Council on the question of the Moroccan Sahara, held in April, in order to exert pressure on the Council.
- The Algerian Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union abuses his role by using the Peace and Security Council to advance his own anti-Moroccan agenda and his country's position on the question of the Moroccan Sahara.
- The communiqué issued after the above-mentioned meeting lacks objectivity and shows a blatant political bias. Its content is completely at odds with the resolutions of the Security Council, which has exclusive responsibility for the issue of the Moroccan Sahara.
- Morocco sent a note verbale to the African Union Commission (see annex) clearly setting out its position regarding consideration of the question of the Moroccan Sahara by the Peace and Security Council and stating that this issue is dealt with exclusively by the Security Council. In his communiqué, the Chairperson of the Commission deliberately omitted to refer to the note verbale and to the Moroccan position, thereby confirming the Commissioner's bias, insidious manoeuvring and diplomatic crusade against Morocco.
- Instead of following the example set by Morocco, which is working to promote inter-African cooperation and integration in the economic, social, humanitarian and political spheres, the other parties persist in their attempts to divide Africa by forcing "communiqués" on the issue of the Moroccan Sahara which are no reflection whatsoever of the positions of the overwhelming majority of African countries and which are designed to undermine the political process conducted under the sole authority of the Security Council, under the auspices of the Secretary-General and with the assistance of his Personal Envoy.

The Security Council is continuing its efforts to achieve a negotiated solution to the dispute, as demonstrated by resolution 2351 (2017), in which the Council strongly reiterates the final parameters of the political solution, which were established by the Council in 2007, and urges neighbouring countries to make important contributions to the United Nations political process.

Lastly, I would like to reaffirm the irrefutable commitment of the Kingdom of Morocco to work, in good faith, with you and your next Personal Envoy, to reach a negotiated political solution to the regional dispute over the Moroccan Sahara,

within the parameters established by the Security Council in its successive resolutions since 2007.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 28, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Omar **Hilale**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 10 May 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Note verbale dated 19 March 2017 from the Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco in Addis Ababa to the African Union Commission

The Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco in Addis Ababa presents its compliments to the African Union Commission and, in reference to its note verbale No. PSD/106/1/42265.17 inviting the Kingdom of Morocco to participate in the briefing on the Sahara scheduled for 20 March, wishes to draw its attention to the following:

- A founding member of the pan-African body, the Kingdom of Morocco is returning to its natural place within its African institutional family;
- The return of Morocco to the African Union is driven by its resolve to contribute to African Union strategies for the development and growth of Africa and its commitment to the continent's unity, peace and security;
- The United Nations Security Council is seized of the question of the Sahara and it is the subject of a political process under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Under Article 12, paragraph 1, of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council continues to exercise its functions in respect of this dispute to seek a negotiated and mutually acceptable political solution;
- In this regard, African Union bodies are invited to support this process and henceforth to adopt a position in line with the treatment of the question of the Sahara at the United Nations, at this time when Morocco is returning to the African family;
- The African Union Peace and Security Council, as an African Union body, is invited to adopt a neutral and objective position in its treatment of the question of the Sahara;
- The Kingdom of Morocco hopes that the African Union will avoid any position that could jeopardize the smooth conduct of the process, especially in the light of the election of a new Secretary-General of the United Nations and a new Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

The Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco in Addis Ababa takes this opportunity to convey to the African Union Commission the renewed assurances of its highest consideration.

United Nations S/2017/420

Security Council

Distr.: General
15 May 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 11 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to attach herewith some points outlining the position of the Republic of the Sudan on the draft resolution on the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei scheduled to be adopted on Friday, 12 May 2017 (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Magdi Ahmed Mofadal **Elnour**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

17-07785 (E) 160517

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Annex to the letter dated 11 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Sudan's position on the draft resolution on the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

- The Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism is part and parcel of the agreements and compromise reached between Sudan and South Sudan in order to solve the pending issues between them, including the Abyei Area question.
- The Sudan Government is not responsible for the obstacles facing the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/312) presented recently to the Security Council states, "Of 40 planned aerial monitoring patrols during the reporting period, 18 were successfully conducted, while 22 were cancelled. A total of 18 of these cancellations, including the suspension of the programme for the entire month of February, were the result of delays in receiving authorization from the South Sudanese authorities."
- The Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism is very important to the stability across the border between Sudan and South Sudan, especially in the light of the recent developments in South Sudan. Sudan is ready to continue cooperating with the Mechanism to enable it to discharge its mandate.
- The Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism needs the operational support of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), which is a neutral body that can help the two sides until they build confidence that enables them to work on their own. Currently, there is no viable alternative to the Mechanism.
- There is a scheduled meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism in Addis Ababa on 15 May 2017. It is hoped that this meeting may lead to improvement of the two countries' relations, including in the activities of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism.
- It is evident that stopping UNISFA support to the operational activities of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism may push one party or the other to take unilateral action.

United Nations S/2017/421

Security Council

Distr.: General
17 May 2017
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 11 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on observance of the ceasefire regime in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period 7 to 11 May 2017 (see annex).

I should be grateful if this letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) P. **Iliichev**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

17-08023 (E) 190517 220517

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Annex to the letter dated 11 May 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on observance of the ceasefire regime (7 May 2017)

The operational situation in the areas covered by the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic has been assessed as stable by all opposing sides.

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 18 incidents of gunfire: 10 in Damascus, 3 in Ladhiqiyah, 3 in Dar'a and 2 in Hama. The Turkish representative office has reported 15 violations: 7 in Hama, 3 in Dar'a, 3 in Homs and 2 in Damascus.

Incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the terrorist groups Nusrah Front and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

A group of fighters shelling government troop positions near Zallaqiyat (21 km north-west of Hama) was the most flagrant violation reported by the Russian representative office.

The Turkish representative office has confirmed that the fighters near Zallaqiyat belonged to the Nusrah Front terrorist group and has agreed to prompt action being taken to restore the ceasefire regime.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on observance of the ceasefire regime (8 May 2017)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 19 incidents of gunfire in the following governorates: 10 in Damascus, 4 in Ladhiqiyah, 4 in Hama and 1 in Dar'a.

The Turkish representative office has reported five violations: four in Damascus governorate and one in Dar'a governorate.

Most incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the terrorist groups Nusrah Front and ISIL.

Regarding the previously reported firefight near Zallaqiyat (21 km north-west of Hama), the Russian representative office requested the Turkish representative office to appeal to opposition-controlled armed groups not to respond to terrorist provocations against Syrian government troops.

The Turkish representative office notified the Russian representative office that it had urged the leaders of the opposition not to respond to provocations from the terrorist groups Nusrah Front and ISIL.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has delivered six tons of drinking water to the local population in Aleppo governorate.

Humanitarian assistance was provided to 1,880 people.

In total, 1,181 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

One United Nations humanitarian operation was carried out: the Russian airline Abakan Air parachuted a total of 21 tons of humanitarian cargo (food products) near to the city of Dayr-al-Zawr.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, four ceasefire agreements have been signed with Habab in Dar'a governorate, Matallah in Damascus governorate, and Sahitah and Kanif in Qunaytirah governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 1,483.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime have continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 213.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on observance of the ceasefire regime (9 May 2017)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 12 incidents of gunfire in the following governorates: 4 in Ladhiqiyah, 3 in Damascus, 3 in Hama and 2 in Dar'a.

The Turkish representative office has reported two violations: one in Damascus governorate and one in Hama governorate.

Most incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the terrorist groups Nusrah Front and ISIL.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out six humanitarian operations, including:

- Four operations carried out in Aleppo city, delivering 4.8 tons of drinking water to the local population
- One ton of food products delivered to the local population in Damascus city
- Two tons of food packages delivered to Suwayda' governorate.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo was 7.8 tons.

Humanitarian assistance was provided to 2,494 people.

In total, 1,187 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

One United Nations humanitarian operation was carried out: the Russian airline Abakan Air parachuted a total of 21 tons of humanitarian cargo (food products) near to the city of Dayr-al-Zawr.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, nine ceasefire agreements have been signed with Judayyah in Dar'a governorate and with Kursiyan, Rujm al-Qatt, Khuraybah, Barnan, Hawa, Judaydat Nawwaf, Umm Halahil and Sha'arah in Idlib governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 1,492.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime have continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 213.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on observance of the ceasefire regime (10 May 2017)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 12 incidents of gunfire in the following governorates: 7 in Damascus, 4 in Ladhiqiyah and 1 in Hama.

The Turkish representative office has reported eight violations: five in Hama governorate and three in Damascus governorate.

Most incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the terrorist groups Nusrah Front and ISIL.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out four humanitarian operations in Aleppo governorate, delivering 4.8 tons of drinking water to the local population.

Humanitarian assistance was provided to 1,507 people.

In total, 1,191 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

One United Nations humanitarian operation was carried out: the Russian airline Abakan Air parachuted a total of 21 tons of humanitarian cargo (food products) near to the city of Dayr-al-Zawr.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, three ceasefire agreements have been signed with Tarmala in Idlib governorate and with Majdal Shams and Sidyana in Qunaytirah governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 1,495.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime have continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah governorates.

Over the past 24 hours, five ceasefire application forms have been signed with the leaders of illegal armed groups.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire has increased to 218.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on observance of the ceasefire regime (11 May 2017)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

Over the past 24 hours, the Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported eight incidents of gunfire in the following governorates: three in Damascus, two in Ladhiqiyah, two in Hama and one in Aleppo.

The Turkish representative office has reported three violations: two in Hama governorate and one in Damascus governorate.

Most incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the terrorist groups Nusrah Front and ISIL.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out two humanitarian operations in Aleppo governorate, delivering 1.7 tons of food products to the local population.

Humanitarian assistance was provided to 840 people.

In total, 1,193 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

One United Nations humanitarian convoy was conducted to Tall Shihab and Kahil in Dar'a governorate.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, no ceasefire regime agreements have been signed with populated areas.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process remains unchanged at 1,495.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime have continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 218.